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AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF SITUATED LEARNING PHENOMENON IN TWO THEATRE PRODUCING COMPANIES IN THE UK



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Table of Contents

1.1 introduction	1
1.2 Three perspectives of organisational learning.....	2
1.3 an investigation of learning in theatre organisations	4
1.4 outline of thesis.....	6
2.1 Introduction	8
2.2 background to the research	8
2.3 the situated characteristics of.....	12
learning.....	12
2.3.1 learning as a situated activity.....	13
2.3.2 learning as social participation.....	15
2.3.3 learning as cultural processes	17
2.4 learning patterns in varied contexts of organisations.....	20
2.4.1 legitimate peripheral participation-based theorising.....	22
2.4.2 CoPs-based theorising.....	31
2.4.3 practice-based theorising.....	40
2.5 power-based theorising	44
2.5.1 Power in organisations – three influential voices	45
2.5.2 The issues of power in organisational learning.....	54

2.6 limitations in the existing organisational learning literature	68
2.7 research questions and research objectives	72
3.1 Introduction	74
3.2 research approach	75
3.2.1 Qualitative research versus Quantitative Research	76
3.2.2 epistemological stance.....	78
3.3 research design – case study.....	79
3.3.1 What is case study useful for?.....	80
3.3.2 what is a case study?	81
3.3.3 why have theatre producing organisations been selected as the research site for the case study?	83
3.4 methods for data collection	95
3.4.1 in-depth interview	96
3.4.2 Ethnographic observation	97
3.4.3 documentation	99
3.5 methods of data analysis	100
3.5.1 principles to kick-start data analysis	101
3.5.2 thematic analysis	102
3.5.3 field note analysis	105
3.5.4 Three concurrent flows of activity for data analysis	106
3.6 case study conducting.....	107

3.6.1 Gaining and maintaining access to the field	107
3.6.2 preparing for data collection.....	112
3.6.3 Collecting evidence	113
3.6.4 kick-start data analysis.....	120
3.6.5 analysing data systematically.....	123
3.7 reporting the cases	126
3.8 Quality of research	126
3.9 reflections on the role of the researcher and research as intervention in the research process.....	129
4.1 introduction	138
4.1.1 Organisational background	138
4.1.2 the process of making theatre productions	147
4.2 Learning activities involved in the Dream Theatre	159
4.2.1. Learning activities associated with production-oriented practice	160
4.2.1.1 Learning to exist in different teams.....	160
4.2.1.2 learning the process of production making	165
4.2.1.3 Learning to solve problems quickly as they emerge.....	170
4.2.1.4 learning to let things go	173
4.2.2 Learning associated with business-oriented work	174
4.2.2.1 Learning to collaborate.....	175
4.2.2.2 Learning from others' experience	182

4.2.2.3 Learning about the company and how things work in a different part of the company	188
4.2.2.4 Learning to deal with unusual roles on the job	195
4.2.2.5 Learning about one's role	198
4.3 management interest in learning and learning initiatives.....	201
4.3.1 Early exploratory stage	202
4.3.2 Recommitment stage.....	207
4.4 a summary.....	228
5.1 introduction	230
5.1.1 Organisation background.....	231
5.1.2 The process of making a theatrical production in the Rainbow.....	237
5.2 Learning activities present in the case of Rainbow	249
5.2.1 Learning activities situated in production-oriented practice.....	249
5.2.1.1 learning to become a practitioner	249
5.2.1.2 Learning to solve problems quickly as they emerge.....	269
5.2.1.3 learning from the experience of others.....	272
5.2.1.4 Learning to deal with unfamiliar tasks on the job	278
5.2.1.5 learning to work as part of a team	282
5.2.2 Learning activities situated in business-oriented practice.....	284
5.2.2.1 Learning about one's job	284
5.2.2.2 Learning about the company and how things work in a different part of the company	294

5.3 management interests in learning and learning initiatives	301
5.4 a summary.....	313
6.1 introduction	316
6.2 work needs as a type of driving force for situated learning	322
6.2.1 needs-driven learning in the case of dream.....	324
6.2.2 needs-driven learning in the case of rainbow	338
6.2.3 discussions of work needs as a type of driving force for learning.....	346
6.3 opportunities for engagement in work practices as a type of driving force for situated learning	353
6.3.1 opportunities-driven learning in the case of dream.....	355
6.3.2 opportunities for engagement in work practices in the case of rainbow..	362
6.3.3. discussions of opportunities for engagement in work practices as a type of driving force for learning	366
6. 4 The influence of management intervention on learning possibilities	370
6. 4.1 the impact of management intervention on the possibilities for needs- driven learning	371
6.4.2 impact of management intervention on the possibilities for opportunities- driven learning	393
6.4.3 the power struggles surrounding learning	404
6.5 The organisational dynamics of learning – an emergent framework	410

7.1. summary of major contributions	416
7.2 strengths and the issue of generalisability	421
7.3 reflections on the research limitations.....	425
7.4 future research directions.....	426
7.5 managerial implications.....	429
7.6 concluding words.....	430
References	432

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that all the work presented in this thesis has been undertaken by myself and it has not been submitted for a degree at another university.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis contributes to the broader academic debate on the understanding of organisational learning from a situated learning perspective. It focuses on the situated characteristics of learning and the relationship between learning and social engagements in organisational contexts.

The thesis notes the focus of many existent studies on conceptualising the situated characteristics of learning at a general level, rather than exploring the specific situated learning patterns involved in a given organisational context. As a consequence, there is a shortage in the research field of in-depth investigations into how such situated learning patterns arise in given organisational contexts. Moreover, the current debate on power in relation to the topic of organizational learning appears to have a negative connotation. This limitation may undermine our understanding of potentially different faces of power. In particular, there is a relative lack of systematic investigation into the influence of management-attempted intervention on learning as well as the power relations mobilised around such influence.

To fill these research gaps, this study explores potential situated learning activities in their immediate contexts using two in-depth case studies of theatre producing companies in the UK. Discussed are the ways these learning activities become possible, and how management intervention impacts on the learning possibilities.

The main conclusions drawn are that situated learning activities in the organisation context under scrutiny are driven by work needs and opportunities

for engagement in work practices. Rather than shaping learning directly, management intervention produces multifaceted yet double-edged consequences; both constraining with respect to some learning possibilities and encouraging with regard to others. Alongside the power of management surrounding the issue of learning in these organisations coexists the ‘power of engaging’, which is an emergent form of power derived from the very process of participating in local work practice from a practitioner’s point of view. There is an on-going pull in the interplay between the power of management and the power of engaging around learning. The power relations involved surrounding learning is more of an ongoing movement in achieving a dynamic balance between the forces that support learning and those that challenge learning.

ABBREVIATIONS

OL – Organizational Learning

LO – Learning Organization

SLT – situated learning theory

COP – community (or communities) of practice

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis explores the possibilities for situated learning and the influences of corporate management intervention on such possibilities in the context of two theatre producing organisations. The main findings of this research are threefold. Firstly, work needs and opportunities for engagement in work practices are the two main driving forces behind learning in the two organisations under investigation. Secondly, managerial intervention does not drive learning activities directly, but has a double-edged impact on the circumstances through which learning can be driven by work needs and opportunities for engagement in work practices. Thirdly, alongside the power of management surrounding the issue of learning in these organisations coexists the ‘power of engaging’ as I term it. This is argued to be an emergent form of power derived from the very process of participating in local work practice from a practitioner’s point of view. There is an on-going pull in the interplay between the power of management and the power of engaging around learning. This pull results from the arising of conflicts of interests, tensions and competition for organisational time resources associated with management intervention on learning.

The thesis stems from my experience of some of the course modules on organisation studies while studying for my Master’s Degree at LSE.

There, I became increasingly interested in the subject of Organisation Learning (OL) research and wanted to conduct doctoral research into this area. While doing more intensive reading on this subject during my first year of research on the Warwick Business School Doctoral Programme, my interest became more focused on organisational learning studies based on situated learning perspectives. Also of interest were those studies that take into account the critical issues of power and conflict in relation to learning possibilities in organisations.

OL research based on situated learning perspectives is important because it has introduced numerous novel lenses through which the relationship between learning and organisations may be explored. These lenses have been introduced through examination of the types of social engagement in practice that provide the proper context for situated learning to take place. Moreover, the possibilities for such learning are explored by viewing the organisation as an organising system rather than simply as an object. In the next section, I briefly explain the context of the OL research and the body of literature this thesis aims to build upon and extend.

1.2 THREE PERSPECTIVES OF ORGANISATIONAL LEARNING

In recent years, OL research has attracted great interest among scholars. The subject has been addressed mainly from three perspectives: a. the

cognitive perspective, which seeks to theorise about organisational learning on the grounds that it is a process of integrating and transforming individuals' cognitive learning processes into organisational routines, information systems and institutional structures; b. the Learning Organisation (LO) perspective, which seeks to provide 'recipes' for and 'discourses' on designing a particular type of organisation with the managerial interest of solving practical problems to achieve better organisational performance; c. the situated learning perspective, which aims to 'explore the specific contexts of activities and social practice in which learning may occur' (Elkjaer: 2005: 44).

The situated learning perspective has been particularly important as it introduces new ways of examining the relationship between learning and organisations. This it does by exploring the social engagement that provides the proper context for situated learning to take place and the possibilities of such learning within an organising system. In particular, the original version of a situated perspective view of learning in Lave and Wenger's study (1991) introduces crucial critical thinking about the contradictions and struggles in the situated learning process by suggesting the lens of power.

However, there remains a need to extend and refine the literature on the situated learning perspectives of OL research due to three areas of limitation depicted in this body of literature. First, there is a relative lack of more detailed exploration of the type of specific social learning

activities that might be involved in the context of formal work organisations, and that take account of the different interest groups and divergent social norms of practices involved. Second, initial critical thinking relating to the issue of the power and struggle aspects of learning, so suggestive in Lave and Wenger's (1991) situated learning theory, has been considerably ignored or marginalised. Such marginalisation has resulted from the emergence of more 'popularised' versions of the situated learning perspective. These versions have arisen through the implied tendency in the literature to emphasise the consensus aspects of a community of practice (e.g. Brown & Duguid, 1991; Wenger, 1998) and collective aspects of learning (e.g. Cook & Yanow, 1993; Yanow, 2000) in work organisations. The third area of limitation lies in the tendency in the extant OL literature to examine power with a negative connotation. This is particularly the case with respect to the controlling and potentially coercive role of management and its problematic impacts on learning possibilities. Such tendency may inhibit the complexity of power issues surrounding learning in organisations.

In the next section, I explain why theatre producing organisations have been chosen as the research site for the present study.

1.3 AN INVESTIGATION OF LEARNING IN THEATRE ORGANISATIONS

In order to address the above limitations, I decided to carry out empirically-driven research to further investigate social learning in relation to organisations based on two in-depth case studies in theatre producing organisations. The researcher regards theatre producing organisations as interesting and appropriate sites for such a study for two principal reasons. Firstly, theatre producing companies, as a type of work organisation, have largely been under-explored in the field of OL research. However, other research traditions (e.g. studies on creative industries) suggest that the nature of a theatre producing organisation is often characterised by open-mindedness, creativity and the rapidly-changing requirements for context-specific and practice-based knowledge/professional skills of employees. This is especially true in respect of the process of theatre production-making. As Voss et al. (2000) point out, the required knowledge and practices are closely linked to the specific situations in each performance-making process. This implies that theatre producing organisations are appropriate sites for studying situated learning activities.

Secondly, some theatre management literature (e.g., Chambers, 2004) suggests that a theatre organisation is often operated with an almost inevitable tension between artistic-led values and managerial efficiency. In this respect, this type of organisation is arguably a suitable site for exploring the relatively under-addressed issues of tensions, conflicts of interest and power in relation to situated learning activities.

Through the case studies, the researcher addresses three particular research questions: a. What are the learning activities entailed in a given theatre producing organisation? b. How do these learning activities arise in each of the theatre producing organisations under examination? c. How does managerial intervention influence the possibility for learning in each of the theatre producing organisations under investigation?

By using an exploratory qualitative research approach and case study as a research strategy, I conducted two in-depth case studies using the cases of the Dream Theatre and the Rainbow Theatre, two medium-to-large theatre producing organisations in the UK. Data were mainly collected through unstructured interviews, observations as well as organisational profiles and documents. The methods used for data analysis include thematic analysis, field note analysis, and documentary analysis. In the final section of this chapter, I offer an outline of the remainder of the thesis.

1.4 OUTLINE OF THESIS

The structure of the remaining chapters of the thesis is as follows: Chapter 2 offers a critical review of the OL literature that shapes the context of the present research. Chapter 3 discusses and explains methodological issues related to the conducting of this research. It also offers reflections on research as intervention in the research process. Descriptive analysis of the empirical work undertaken in this research is

presented in detail in Chapters 4 and 5, with Chapter 4 focusing on the case of the Dream Theatre and Chapter 5 on the case of the Rainbow Theatre. Chapter 6 develops an emergent analytical framework of the empirical findings, and discusses the theoretical insights in reference to previous literature reviewed. Chapter 7 is a concluding chapter consisting of a summary of the major contributions of the present study; reflections on research strengths and limitations; implications for future research; and implications for directors and managers of organizations.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to offer a review of the organisation learning (OL) literature that is relevant to the defining of the research gaps and research problems for the present study.

The remainder of this chapter is structured into four sections: Section 2.2 provides background to the present research and justifies the areas of debate on OL research to which this thesis aims to contribute. Section 2.3 focuses on the body of literature that conceptualises the situated characteristics of learning. Section 2.4 draws attention to the literature that seeks to theorise about learning patterns in various organisational contexts from situated perspectives. The term ‘learning patterns’ used here refers to particular ways in which learning is done, organised or happens. Section 2.5 draws attention to the strand of OL studies interested in theorising the issue of power in relation to learning. Section 2.6 highlights limitations in the reviewed organisational learning literature; Finally, Section 2.7 establishes the research objectives and research questions of the present study.

2.2 BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

The present study is located in the broader debate on the subject of organisational learning research that favours a situated perspective on

learning inspired by Lave and Wenger's (1991) work on situated learning. Here, the term 'organisational learning' is used in a broad sense, referring to a range of scholarly inquiries into the nature of learning in relation to the essence of organisation. Organisation is not only understood as 'empirical objects', but also as the social process of 'organising' (Clegg and Hardy 1996). Research adopting a situated perspective on learning tends to conceptualise learning as social activities situated in the participation of social practice. Therefore, learning is viewed as having social and situated characteristics rather than being merely a cognitive activity (Brown and Ducuid 1991; Lave and Wenger 1991; Cook and Yanow 1993; Wenger 1998; Yanow 2000). This approach to OL studies questions whether organisations are capable of learning in the same way as individuals. It tends to treat the concept of OL metaphorically as a complex social-cultural phenomenon (Gherardi and Nicolini 2000). This approach studies learning as a way of being and becoming part of the social worlds that comprise an organisation, in which the central issue of learning is argued to be becoming a practitioner (Brown and Ducuid 1991; Richter 1998).

The importance of OL research from a situated perspective is that it has shifted the focus of inquiry from the individual's mind/cognition into the participation patterns of individual members of an organisation in which learning is considered to take place (Elkjaer 2005). This perspective allows researchers to explore the social engagement that

provides the proper context for learning to take place and the possibilities of such learning within an organisational system. As Elkjaer (2005) notes, OL research from the social (situated) perspective of learning aims to ‘explore the specific contexts of activities and social practice in which learning may occur’ (p. 44). Moreover, the situated perspective on OL research calls for more critical thinking about the early optimistic views of learning organisation studies. These views were derived from managerial discourses and interests concerning more practical issues of learning and their implications for management (Goodman and Goodman 1976; Coopey 1995; Nicolini, Gherardi et al. 1996; Easterby-Smith 1997; Coopey and Burgoyne 2000). The situated perspective on OL research draws our attention to the somewhat taken-for-granted issues of power relations, legitimacy of knowledge and potential conflict of interests in a given organisational context, as overlooked in both the cognitive and practical approaches to OL studies.

For example, Driver (2002) pointed out that most of the non-situated perspective on OL research tends to view organisation learning as a matter of creating an ideal vision of learning organisation that promises a workplace utopia (Driver 2002). In that context, a group of people can work and learn together collectively in a cooperative and trusting environment. This approach to OL studies adopts rather prescriptive accounts of learning by prescribing ‘recipes’ for achieving a vision of a learning organisation. It places great emphasis on the important role of

management in directing and designing learning processes.

However, scholars who adopted a situated perspective on learning argued that the research discourses on learning organisation appear to imply a tendency to privilege management discourse and interest for the purpose of control and domination (Coopey 1994; Coopey 1995; Coopey 1998; Blackler and McDonald 2000; Coopey and Burgoyne 2000; Fox 2000; Vince 2001; Contu and Willmott 2003; Ferdinand 2004; Hong and Snell 2008; Sherlock and Nathan 2008). As Driver (2002) commented, the ‘promising’ literature on learning organisation or organisation learning is potentially ‘a manipulative and exploitative ideology’. It masks more power of control, rather than offering an ideal workplace. Other scholars express a similar view that the manipulative discourse on OL may present a dominant coalition that determines the kind of learning acceptable in a given organisational context (Coopey 1995; Easterby-Smith 1997). In particular, Coopey (1994; 1995) questions the notion of ‘OL’ and asks: ‘Whose knowledge should be privileged over others in determining the direction of learning?’ The more critical position adopted in the situated perspective of OL studies cautions researchers not to overlook the probable co-existence of different interest groups in organisations and their potential implications for issues of power and conflict (e.g. Coopey, 1994; 1995; 1998; Contu & Willmott, 2003). As some scholars have reminded us, neither learning nor organisational learning is necessarily a consistent and struggle-free

process, especially when we take the issues of power into account (Lave and Wenger 1991; Fox 2000; Contu and Willmott 2003; Raz and Fadlon 2006).

The present study is broadly positioned against the above backdrops to OL studies. This study intends to explore the subject of organisational learning further by adopting a position inclining towards a situated perspective. In this respect, at the most general level, the study follows the early insights into the situated characteristics of learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Cook & Yanow, 1993; Wenger, 1998; Yanow, 2000). It, therefore, regards learning as a ‘situated activity’ that is an integral part of social practice, rather than a cognitive one.

In light of this, the following review of the OL literature will focus principally on those OL studies that draw on the situated perspectives of learning.

2.3 THE SITUATED CHARACTERISTICS OF LEARNING

To date, there has been increasing scholarly interest in learning from a situated perspective and an awareness of the need to highlight the situated characteristics of learning. This study considers the three strands of research in the existing literature that have been significantly influential in setting the foundations for conceptualising the situated characteristics of learning: learning as a situated activity, learning as social participation, and learning as cultural processes. Each of these

aspects is elaborated below.

2.3.1 LEARNING AS A SITUATED ACTIVITY

Lave and Wenger's (1991) 'situated learning theory' (SLT) plays a significant role in shaping our understanding of learning from social perspectives. As Contu and Willmott (2003) state, Lave and Wenger's (1991) work has been pivotal in drawing together the doubts about the dominant cognitive learning model into a more sustained conceptualisation of situated learning theory. Similarly, William F. Hanks made comments in the 'foreword' to Lave and Wenger's (1991) book that the significance of their work draws our attention to the relationship between learning and the social situation, rather than to defining learning as a product of acquiring propositional knowledge.

Based on their studies of five historical cases of apprenticeships, Yucatec midwives, Vai and Gola tailors, naval quartermasters, meat cutters and non-drinking alcoholics, Lave and Wenger (1991) argue that learning is a situated activity, and is an integral and inseparable aspect of social practice.

By viewing learning as a situated activity, what is important to learning is not the acquisition of abstract knowledge and information, but rather one's ability to read the local context and act in ways that are recognised and valued by other members of the immediate community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). In this respect, learning is not merely situated

in practice, but most importantly, an integral part of generative social practice in the lived-in world (Lave & Wenger, 1991). In order to translate this perspective into a specific analytical approach to learning, they propose the concept of 'Legitimate Peripheral Participation' (LPP) as a descriptor of engagement in practice that entails learning as an integral consistent. The notion of LPP is used to stress the point that learning is not merely situated practice, but an integral part of social practice through engagement in that social practice. Lave and Wenger argue that LPP can be understood as a process of participating in communities of practitioners in which newcomers learn to master knowledge and skills. Such mastery allows newcomers to move toward full participation in the social-cultural practices of a community. In Lave and Wenger's view, LPP is the 'central defining characteristic' of situated learning (1991: 29).

Lave and Wenger (1991) discover that apprentices do not learn much in specific master-apprentice relations. It is not the relation of apprentice to his own master, but the apprentice's relations to other apprentices and even to other masters that organise opportunities to learn. Lave and Wenger (1991) state that there seems to be very little observable teaching; the more basic phenomenon is learning which, in Lave and Wenger's view, seems to emerge through the practice of the community with legitimate peripheral access. As they observe, apprentices are initially kept in peripheral participation rather than full participation.

They gradually assemble a general idea of what constitutes the practice of the community, such as who they are, and how they work, etc. (ibid). At the same time, Lave and Wenger note that there are strong goals for learning because learners, as peripheral participants, can ‘develop a view of what the whole enterprise is about, and what there is to be learned’ (p.93). In Lave and Wenger’s view, these goals are about ‘becom[ing] full practitioners’.

2.3.2 LEARNING AS SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

Another influential strand of the situated perspective on learning is contributed by Wenger (1998), who advocates a broader conceptual framework for learning by articulating the key concept ‘communities of practice’ (COPS). A primary focus of Wenger’s (1998) framework is to suggest the view that learning, in its essence, is part of our lived experiences of participation in the world as a fundamental social phenomenon, ‘reflecting our own deeply social nature as human beings capable of knowing’. In this respective, Wenger (1998) sees learning is related to social participation.

As the basis of his framework, Wenger (1998) makes a number of explicit assumptions about learning, knowledge, knowing, outcome of learning, relationship between learner and organisations, and ideal type of organisation. At the core of his assumptions are three emphases: a) the active engagement of human beings in pursuing valued activities in

both everyday life and organisational lives that are meaningful to them; b) knowing as a matter of participating; c) the goodwill of an organisation to provide a supportive context within which communities that develop these practices can prosper. These emphases shape the situated characteristics of learning in Wenger's (1998) framework. As Wenger (1998) argues, learning is not a static subject, but the very process of being engaged in, participating in and developing ongoing practice. The core of Wenger's (1998) conceptualisation of learning is the notion of practice, which, he argues, is about the negotiation of meaning, participation and reification; the 'process of giving form to our experience by producing objects that congeal this experience into thingness' (p. 58).

Building on his notion of 'practice', Wenger (1998) suggests that learning in practice includes the following three patterns of processes for the participants involved: 1) 'evolving forms of mutual engagement: discovering how to engage, what helps and what hinders; developing mutual relationships; defining identities, establishing who is who, who is good at what, who knows what, who is easy or hard to get along with'; 2) 'understanding and tuning their enterprise: aligning their engagement with it, and learning to become and hold each other accountable to it; struggling to define the enterprise and reconciling conflicting interpretations of what the enterprise is about'; and 3) 'developing their repertoire, styles and discourses: renegotiating the

meaning of various elements, producing or adopting tools, artefacts, representations, recording and recalling events; inventing new terms and redefining or abandoning old ones; telling and retelling stories, creating and breaking routines' (p. 95).

As Fox (2000) summarises, Wenger (1998) sees learning as negotiation of meaning and the process of identity formation within communities of practice. By conceptualising learning as social participation through articulation of the concept of practice, Wenger's study (1998) can be regarded as an extension to the situated perspective view of learning propounded in Lave and Wenger's (1991) situated learning theory.

2.3.3 LEARNING AS CULTURAL PROCESSES

The 'cultural view' of learning initially propounded in Cook and Yanow (1993), and further developed in Yanow (2000) has also been influential in shifting our focus away from the conceptual difficulties of studying organisational learning from a cognitive view. Instead, it directs us to the discovery of situated characteristics of learning beyond individual levels as well as the qualities of organisations that may underpin the learning process or may be shaped by learning.

Cook and Yanow (1993) suggest treating the most debated question in the field of OL studies, 'can organisations learn?' as an empirical inquiry about organisational actions, rather than an epistemological inquiry into cognitive capacities. By questioning 'what is the nature of

learning as done by organisations?’ Cook and Yanow (1993) argue that learning associated with organisations involves know-how as collective activities of a group, rather than as individual activities. In this respect, Cook and Yanow (1998) place the analytical emphasis of learning on the group level. They use the term OL to refer to the ‘capacity of an organisation to learn how to do what it does, where what it learns is possessed not by individual members of the organisation, but by the aggregate itself’ (p. 438). As they argue, it is when a group acquires the know-how associated with its ability to carry out its collective activities that constitutes organisational learning.

Accordingly, the ‘cultural views’ of learning propounded in Cook and Yanow’s study (1993) open discussions into the aspect of the human capacity to act in groups and a culture that is meaningfully understood and constituted in the joint action or practice undertaken by groups. Moreover, it is argued that the inter-subjective meanings that group members express in their common practice through objects, language, and acts are cultural artefacts through which an organisation’s collective knowledge or know-how is transmitted, expressed, and put to use (Cook & Yanow, 1993). In this respect, the nature of learning associated with organisations is seen as ‘acquiring, sustaining, or changing of their subjective meanings through the art factual vehicles of their expression and transmission and collective actions of the group’ in organisations (Cook & Yanow, 1993: 449).

Yanow (2000) revisits the early arguments of a ‘cultural view’ of learning in Cook and Yanow (1993) further develops the concept into a more comprehensible methodological choice, termed ‘an interpretative approach to organisational learning research from a culture perspective’. This approach stresses the importance of studying ‘local knowledge’ as a medium of sense-making of lived experiences of realities at work. Accordingly, Yanow (2000) suggests that adopting an interpretative cultural perspective means focusing research inquiries on collectives and their acts (including interactions), and the objects that are the focus of these acts, as well as the language used in these acts, together with the site-specific meanings of these various artefacts to the actors in the situations. It also means focusing on using interpretative methods designed to access and analyse these data.

The principal attempt by Yanow (2000), and Cook and Yanow (1993) is to conceptualise a cultural view with an interpretative approach to OL as a methodological issue rather than as a concept under examination. Nevertheless, both studies draw our attention to some situated characteristics of learning. Their studies suggest viewing learning as cultural processes. As Yanow (2000) argues, adopting a cultural view/approach frees the researcher to see the underlying relationship among actors, activities, structures, meanings, values and artefacts embedded in the organisational context. The main contribution made by this cultural view of learning is that it expands our scope of

investigation of the learning phenomenon to include questions such as, ‘what is made visible, to whom, for what purposes?’ (p.255). An additional point of significance of this approach lies in its conceptual insight that demonstrates the inseparable relationship between learning and culture. A cultural view using an interpretive approach does not regard learning as necessarily being associated with organisational changes or a process that may lead to such changes; rather, being solely for the purpose of organisational maintenance or sustenance (Yanow, 2000).

As Gherardi (2000) comments on the significance of the cultural perspective (e.g., Cook & Yanow, 1993), it has most thoroughly developed the concept of situated knowledge and of practice as situated in specific contexts.

So far, the review has acknowledged the studies fundamental in defining learning from situated perspectives. These perspectives have been considerably influential in offering the basis of theorising the ways situated learning is done, organised and happens in the context of a given organisation. In the following section, the review focuses on acknowledging the different theories/frameworks/perspectives on conceptualising learning patterns in varied contexts of organisations.

2.4 LEARNING PATTERNS IN VARIED CONTEXTS OF ORGANISATIONS

In this section, the current review presents different research approaches to theorising about learning patterns in varied organisational contexts. The approaches considered in this review are those mostly associated with the early influential studies that define the situated nature of learning, as illustrated in Section 2.3. The present review summarises these approaches into three categories: legitimate peripheral, participation-based theorising (LPP-based theorising), communities of practice-based theorising (CoPs-based theorising), and practice-based theorising.

These categories are named as such because the ideas of LPP, CoPs and practice appear to be three different central concepts used respectively in the OL literature, with each having its own emphasis of inquiry. I use the term LPP-based theorising to refer to Lave and Wenger's (1991) original ideas about and explanation of learning patterns. This type of theorising emphasises the view that learning emerges through the practice of the community with legitimate peripheral access. The term CoPs-based theorising refers to OL studies (e.g. Brown & Duguid, 1991; Wenger, 1998) which, in their analysis of learning, selectively adopt the notion of communities of practices, especially from Lave and Wenger's SLT (1991). The selectively adopted idea of communities of practice tends to emphasise the idea of 'community' and play down the issue of power. This has been criticised on the grounds that it is biased towards coherence and harmony (Gherardi, Nicolini et al. 1998; Reynolds 2000;

Gherardi 2009). When using the term ‘practice-based theorising’, I refer to the strand of studies on learning and knowing by connecting them with the notion of practice drawn out of the main common concerns from multiple theoretical traditions in the sociology literature. Gherardi (2000) initially promoted the term ‘practice-based theorising on learning and knowing’ to categorise this body of literature. It was then further developed and became frequently known as the ‘practice-based approach’ in some other scholarly studies (Gherardi and Nicolini 2000; Gherardi 2001; Gherardi and Nicolini 2002).

To clarify one point, the present review intentionally excludes the stream of learning literature commonly classified as ‘problem-based learning’ (PBL), which mainly seeks to apply social perspective views of learning for practical purposes. The body of literature on PBL is usually concerned more with implications of theories and is often linked to the development of instructional methods, pedagogical approaches and curriculum design that can be used in educational or work settings (e.g., Barrows and Tamblyn 1980; Savery and Duffy 1995; Poikela 2004). It is for this reason that the literature on PBL is deliberately avoided in the present review.

2.4.1 LEGITIMATE PERIPHERAL PARTICIPATION-BASED THEORISING

The learning pattern arising in the context studied by Lave and Wenger

(1991) is described through the concept of legitimate peripheral participation (LPP). As Lave and Wenger (1991) use the concept, LPP is the process through which newcomers become experienced members and eventually old-timers of a community of practice in the context of the apprenticeships under their investigation (Lave & Wenger 1991). Clarifying that they intend to use the term legitimate peripheral participation as a whole concept rather than three individual components, they justify the interconnection between the components of the concept of LPP on four grounds: firstly, they use the term ‘legitimacy of participation’ to refer to the character of belonging, which is argued to be ‘not only ... a condition for learning, but a constitutive element of its content’ (Lave & Wenger, 1991:36). Secondly, the term ‘peripherality’ suggests that there are ‘multiple, varied, and inclusive ways of being located in the fields of participation defined by a community’ (p. 36). It is important to note that in using the term ‘community’, Lave and Wenger do not imply necessarily a culture-sharing entity; rather they assume there is diversity of interests, contributions to activity and viewpoints. In this respect, ‘peripheral participation’ is ‘about being located in the social world’ (p.36). This implies that ‘changing locations and perspectives are part of actors’ learning trajectories, developing identities, and forms of membership’ (ibid). Thirdly, Lave and Wenger use the term ‘legitimate peripherality’ as a complex notion that can imply two different situations: 1) a place either as an empowering position where a participant moves toward more

intensive participation; or 2) a place as a disempowering position where participants are kept away from participating more fully. Finally, they clarify that they use the term ‘full participation’ to imply what peripheral participation is not. They purposely avoid using the term ‘central participation’ and ‘complete participation’. They consider that both terms may unintentionally imply that a community of practice has a single core, centre or participation which can be measured by the degree of knowledge acquisition. Lave and Wenger use the term ‘communities of practice’ in a general sense to refer to ‘a set of relations among persons, activity and world’ (Lave & Wenger, 1991: 98). In respect to the specific context of apprenticeships, they use the term ‘communities of practice’ to refer to ‘an activity system about which participants share understanding concerning what they are doing and what that means in their lives and for their community. Thus, they are united in both action and in the meaning that action has, both for themselves, and for the larger collective’ (ibid).

According to the principle of LPP, newcomers are initially kept in peripheral forms of participation that are less central to the functioning of the community before gradually gaining legitimate access to participation in fuller practices of the community. As Contu and Willmott (1999) point out, the focus of SLT is on social and practical aspects of any joint, purposeful and shared practice among individuals.

In Lave and Wenger’s view, LPP is dependent on the ‘characteristics of

the division of labour in the social milieu' (p.92) that feature the 'structuring resources' for learning. Lave and Wenger (1991) see 'resource' as a medium and outcome of participating in communities of practice. They further explain this point by arguing that structuring resources shape the process and content of learning possibilities and apprentices' changing perspectives on what is known and done. They point out that 'a crucial resource for increasing participation' is 'the 'transparency' of the socio-political organisation of practice and of its artifacts engaged in practice' (Lave & Wenger, 1991: 91). The transparency of the organisation of practice does not only imply that artifacts are simply made available to the learners. More importantly, it implies these artifacts are designed and used in a way that encodes and reveals the knowledge within communities of practice and ways of perceiving and manipulating characteristics of a community of practice.

For example, they suggest that the transparency of a technology lies in its constant presence with respect to some purpose and its intricate connection to the cultural practice and social organisation within which the technology is meant to function. Thus, technology should not be viewed simply as an artifact in itself, but as a process that involves specific forms of participation, in which the technology fulfills a dedicated function.

Regarding the process of learning defined by the principle of LPP, Lave and Wenger (1991) argue that it has problematic features and is never

simply a process of transfer or assimilation. The problems include the contradictions and struggles inherent in social practice and the formation of identities. One fundamental contradiction they exemplified is the competitive relations between the newcomers and old-timers in terms of levels of participation. They indicate that the apprentices as newcomers to the community are initially kept on the periphery and prevented from full participation. It is through the process of LPP that apprentices gradually develop a general idea of what constitutes the practice of the community (e.g., who they are, what they do and how they work, etc.), which allows the newcomers to begin to access more intensive forms of participation. In such a process, some of the apprentices may have themselves become masters, the relative old-timers in respect to the newcomers in a given community of practice. In this respect, the learning pattern involves the working out of these contradictions in practice. The notion of community of practice (CoPs) is understood as the social network in which the process of learning as participation takes place (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Lave and Wenger further argue that contradictions inherent in social practice may imply potential conflict between the ‘forces that support processes of learning and those that work against them’ (p.57). They link this concern to the issue of power, suggesting that this issue may influence possibilities for learning in the context of apprenticeships. In their view, the notion of ‘power’ is connected with ‘social organisation

of and control over resources' (p. 37). The term 'resources' is understood as a medium and outcome of participation in communities of practice. Lave and Wenger argue that the operation of power can enable or constrain/deny access to communities of practice, influencing a degree of legitimacy upon novices as a normal condition of participation in learning processes. This notion of power is exemplified through Lave and Wenger's term 'legitimate peripherality', as reviewed earlier, a place that serves as both an empowering and disempowering position that can both facilitate and restrict full participation.

Moreover, Lave and Wenger draw our attention to two distinctive situations where: a. learning arises through pedagogical activities (e.g., the relationship between the apprentices and their masters); and b. learning arises from the principle of LPP in communities of practice. Lave and Wenger introduce the concepts 'teaching curriculum' and 'learning curriculum' to explain the differences. The concept 'learning curriculum' is understood as 'situated opportunities for the improvisational development of new practice from the perspective of learners' (Lave and Wenger 1991:97). In the context of apprenticeships, opportunities for learning are, more often than not, the 'given structure' provided by work practices instead of by strongly 'asymmetrical master-apprentice relations' (p. 93). Despite lack of clarification of the meaning of 'given structure', Lave and Wenger further argue that a learning curriculum is 'a field of learning resources in everyday practice' (p. 97)

that unfolds in opportunities for engagement in practice. They stress that a learning curriculum is essentially situated and therefore, 'cannot be considered in isolation, manipulated in arbitrary didactic terms, or analysed apart from the social relations that shape legitimate peripheral participation' (ibid).

In contrast, the concept 'teaching curriculum' is used to draw our attention to the curriculum 'constructed for the instruction of newcomers' (ibid). As Lave and Wenger (1991) indicate, a teaching curriculum offers an external view of the meaning of what is learned and control of access to it in both peripheral and its subsequently more complex and intensified forms mediated through an instructor's participation. In this respect, a teaching curriculum supplies as well as limits the structuring resources of learning. The noted distinction between a 'learning curriculum' and a 'teaching curriculum' is important because it reflects their critical thinking about the various forms of participation in a community of practice.

According to Lave and Wenger, legitimate peripheral participation is the learning pattern arising in the context of apprenticeships. The possibility for this learning pattern is argued to be defined by the social structure of a community of practice, its power relations and its conditions for legitimacy. By propounding these critical elements in relation to learning, Lave and Wenger offer crucial insights into the learning patterns and the dynamic situations through which learning patterns may

arise. This is achieved by taking particular account of the potential contradictions and struggles embedded in the given community of practice of the apprenticeships. As Contu and Willmott (Denzin and Lincoln 2005) indicate, Lave and Wenger's insights into situated learning stem from a critical social perspective that brings together issues of history, power, practice and identity.

Despite its pivotal influence in shaping our understanding of learning as a social phenomenon, to varying degrees, Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory may be limited in explaining the learning phenomenon in other types of contexts where the organisation is featured with more elements than those considered in the context of apprenticeship. Three possible reasons for this are listed as follows: firstly, the organisational context for apprenticeship is largely based on a form of community that has less rigorous formal structure in comparison with the type of work organisation that has a clear, formal structure. Secondly, in a formally structured organisation, there are formal hierarchies that may endow a certain group of participants (e.g., the managers) with more power over another group (e.g., subordinates). However, the organisational context of apprenticeship based on the relationship between apprentices and their masters as well as the relationship among the apprentices themselves is not necessarily characterised by such a hierarchical relationship. Thirdly, in a formally structured organisation, there is often a commonly shared objective and goal towards which all members are

obliged to work. In contrast, in the organisational context of apprenticeships, a commonly shared objective and goal is not necessary. This is explicitly indicated by Lave and Wenger's use of the notion 'community', which does not imply 'some primordial culture-sharing entity' (p. 98).

Nevertheless, both 'learning curriculum' and 'teaching curriculum' may require further development as they raise several related questions still unanswered (at least, not explicitly answered) by Lave and Wenger's work (1991): what are the specific situated opportunities involved in a learning curriculum? What is the 'given structure' that shapes a learning curriculum? Who is the instructor of a teaching curriculum in a community of practice and why are the others not? How does an 'instructor' implement a teaching curriculum (through what means)? How is the 'external view' of learning in a teaching curriculum different from what is actually learned in a learning curriculum?

In respect of the underlying limitations in Lave and Wenger's (1991) work as mentioned above, their situated learning framework through the principle of LPP is not directly applicable to learning patterns in formal types of work organisations.

Lave and Wenger (1991) do emphasise the importance of power in shaping the formulation of community and participation as well as the possibilities for learning. However, they do not make any real attempt to

investigate the issue and leave some of the key concepts in their framework under-developed. Indeed, Lave and Wenger themselves acknowledge this limitation of their work: ‘The concept of “communities of practice” is left largely as an intuitive notion... which requires a more rigorous treatment ... in particular unequal relations of power must be included more systematically in our analysis’ (1991: 42).

Nevertheless, Lave and Wenger’s situated learning framework is embraced by many scholars who seek to apply or develop the framework in formal organisational settings.

In the next section, I review the popularised versions of situated learning theory that place great emphasis on the idea of communities of practice and the insights they offer regarding the learning patterns beyond the organisational context of apprenticeships.

2.4.2 CoPs-BASED THEORISING

CoPs-based theorising draws attention to OL studies which, in their analysis of learning, selectively adopt the notion of communities of practice, especially from Lave and Wenger’s SLT (1991). According to Contu and Willmott (2003), the lens of SLT draws attention to ‘learning as a pervasive embodied activity involving the acquisition, maintenance, and transformation of knowledge through processes of social interaction’ (p. 285). This theoretical lens, especially through the principal element of CoPs, is embraced by many other scholars in the field of OL studies.

Such scholars argue that learning occurs, and knowledge is created, mainly through interactions between people and their practices of social participation (Brown and Duguid 1991; Cook and Yanow 1993; Nicolini and Meznar 1995; Wenger 1998; Gherardi and Nicolini 2000). Fox (2000) classifies this common interest in CoPs under the term ‘CoPs theory’ – a theory about learning as socialisation, where increasing participation in a community of practice is the key to both how learning happens and how identity is formed.

As Gherardi et al. (1998) highlight, the notion of CoPs has been conceptualised by many authors as informal aggregation defined not only by its members, but by the shared manner in which they do things and interpret events (e.g., Brown and Duguid 1991; Eckert 1993). For example, Handley et al. (2006) draw on the original SLT and view learning as emergent, involving opportunities for participating in the practices of community as well as for developing identity as a sense of belonging and commitment.

However, it is Brown and Duguid (1991) who fertilise the OL field with a popularised version of CoPs through a selective adoption of Lave and Wenger’s situated learning theory (Contu & Willmott, 1999). As Contu and Willmott further point out, Brown and Duguid (1991) tend to regard situated learning as a medium or even a technology of consensus and stability by promoting the idea of communities of practice as locales of

learning and knowledge management.

By identifying CoPs as a mechanism through which knowledge and learning is created and transferred, Brown and Duguid (1991) bring to mind a positive, collaborative, sharing environment in which learning arises. Building on such understanding of CoPs and the reinterpretation of Orr's empirical study (Orr 1987aa; 1987bb; Orr 1990aa; 1990bb), Brown and Duguid (1991) promote a united view of working, learning and innovation. They argue that the central issue in learning is about becoming a practitioner rather than learning about practice. In their words, 'learning, from the viewpoint of LPP involves becoming an "insider". Learners ... learn to function in a community ... acquiring that particular community's subjective viewpoint and learn to speak its language' (Brown & Duguid, 1991: 48).

The co-authors further point out that the possibilities for such learning are situated in practices and communities, particularly through the following situations: 1. Learning is enabled by fostering access to, and membership of, the target community of practice; 2. If training is designed and learners are unable to observe the activity of the practitioner, learning is inevitably impoverished; 3. Learning needs legitimate access to the periphery of communication (e.g., to computer mail, to formal and informal meetings or to telephone conversations).

Brown and Duguid's (1991) study extends the selective insights of Lave

and Wenger's situated learning framework into an organisational context other than that of apprenticeships. Their contribution lies in opening up to the informal, non-canonical elements within organisational life which have been generally denied or neglected (Ghauri 2004).

However, Brown and Duguid's application (1991) is criticised for 'reducing the original insights of SLT into a dualist view of theory/practice, formal/informal, canonical/non-canonical' (Contu and Willmott 2003). In particular, it shifts the original thinking of Lave and Wenger (1991), namely that peripherality and legitimation are a social historical constitution, into a more fixed and managerial stance. For example, this shifted emphasis can be seen in Brown and Duguid's (1991) argument that peripherality may be moved, designed, promoted, allocated, and displaced in order to favour more effective learning processes within an organisation (Contu and Willmott 1999). Moreover, the selective version of SLT typified by Brown and Duguid (1991) discards Lave and Wenger's (1991) idea that learning practices are shaped, enabled, and constrained within relations of power (Contu & Willmott, 2003).

In addition, Brown and Duguid's (1991) analytical stance towards learning is limited to theoretical deduction and lack of originality in the use of data. As Contu and Willmott (2003) point out, Brown and Duguid's article seeks to mobilise Orr's (Orr 1990a; Orr 1990b; Orr

1996) study of photocopy technicians as secondary evidence to illustrate how adequately Lave and Wenger have conceptualised power in their situated learning theory. Accordingly, Contu and Willmott (1999) further point out that a limitation in the existing literature is the dearth of empirical work in OL which can inform the original insights of SLT and reflect critically on the way in which learners/members become knowing, belonging and doing in situated practice.

A more detailed and systematic conceptualisation of the concept of communities of practice was developed by Wenger (1998) and then developed in his subsequent works (Foucault 1980; Wenger, McDermott et al. 2002; Wenger 2003). As reviewed earlier in Section 2.3.2, the type of learning considered in Wenger's study (1998) is a broader sense of learning in the context of our lived experience of participation in the world. In this respect, Wenger (1998) assumes, rather than critically studies, learning as a fundamental social phenomenon that reflects our own deeply social nature as human beings capable of knowing. On the basis of that assumption, Wenger (1998) defines learning as social participation that involves the very process of participating in developing an ongoing practice. Based on such understanding of learning, Wenger (1998) promotes the framework of CoPs to describe the situations, processes, and mechanisms through which people learn in everyday life; whether at home, at work, at school, or in our hobbies. As Wenger (1998) notes:

‘Being alive as human beings means that we are constantly engaged in the pursuit of enterprise of all kinds ... As we define these enterprises and engage in their pursuit together, we interact with each other and with the world, and we tune our relations with each other and with the world accordingly... These practices are thus the property of a kind of community created over time by the sustained pursuit of a shared enterprise. It makes sense, therefore, to call these kinds of communities of practice.’ (p.45)

Wenger (2000) refines the notion of CoPs through the following description:

‘Members are bound together by their collective developed understanding of what their community is about’ (p. 229) which determines ‘what matters and what does not, with whom we must share what we understand.’ (p. 239)

A more rigid definition of CoPs is seen in Wenger (2002), who states: ‘communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interaction on an ongoing basis’ (p.4). Wenger et al. (2002) develops the concept further by suggesting that each CoPs has three fundamental characteristics, summarised as the ‘basic structure’ of CoPs by Wenger (2004). This basic structure includes: 1. The Domain – ‘the area of knowledge that brings the

community together, gives it its identity, and defines the key issues that members need to address'; 2. The Community – 'the group of people for whom the domain is relevant, the quality of the relationships among members, and the definition of the boundary between the inside and the outside'; 3. The Practice: 'the body of knowledge, methods, tools, stories, cases, documents, which members share and develop together' (p.3).

The significance of Wenger's (1998) framework is that it offers 'a systematic vocabulary to talk about' (p.8) learning as a 'lived [and familiar] experience of participation in the world' (p.7) – 'whether we see it or not' (p. 8). Such discourse echoes the social perspective views of learning by many other scholars who argue that learning occurs, and knowledge is created, mainly through interaction between people and their practice of social participation (Brown and Ducuid 1991; Cook and Yanow 1993; Nicolini and Mezner 1995; Gherardi and Nicolini 2000).

It is argued that the reasons for the popularity of the concept of CoPs are its capacity to help us to understand the process by which the transmission of tacit knowledge and of knowledge-in-action takes place (Gherardi, Nicolini et al. 1998), and its promise to contribute significantly to both learning literature and organisational practice (Barley 1996). Gherardi et al. (1998) further indicate that the notion of CoPs is a powerful conceptual tool for understanding the social processes related to the undertaking of practice. It draws our attention to

the link between the emergence of relations created around activities, and the activities that are shaped through social relations (ibid). The popularised version of CoPs has also achieved prominence in the context of wider debates on knowledge management and learning practice in organisations (Swan, Scarbrough et al. 2002). As Roberts (2006) indicates, the notion of CoPs has been increasingly adopted for managerial practical interests as part of their strategies or toolbox for promoting knowledge and learning in their organisations.

According to Fox (2000), the contributions of the CoPs-based perspective lie in its capacity to present an integrated view of learning and working, and to allow us to see organisations as communities of practice, where each sub-community of practice of an organisation recruits newcomers who learn from its old-timers, and socially reproduces the unit (e.g. Brown & Duguid, 1991).

However, Fox (2000) also points out several limitations of the CoPs-based theorising approach: 1. It tells us little about how, in concrete practice, members of a CoPs change that practice or innovate; 2. The notion of CoPs is left as an intuitive concept and is rather vague in Lave and Wenger's (1991) study; 3. Unequal relations of power are particularly signposted as important to the analysis, yet not systematically included in Lave and Wenger's (1991) study; 4. Although Wenger (1998) provides a more detailed account of CoPs, he does not really address unequal relations of power that were so

suggestively prominent in Lave and Wenger (1991). Fox (2000) explains his comment on the last point by referring back to some aspects of Wenger's (1998) work. As Fox reviews, Wenger (1998) makes explicit reference to power in his analysis mainly in two places, both concerning the issue of identity (i.e., how people become members and then belong to communities). Thus, Wenger (1998) handles power as an aspect of identity formation, rather than practice per se.

There have been an increasing number of concerns about the popularised version of CoPs typified by Brown and Duguid (1991), Wenger (1998) and several subsequent studies (e.g. Wenger, 2002, 2004; Wenger et al., 2002). For example, Contu and Willmott (2003) criticise it on the grounds that the idea of community is conceptualised in a way that tends to assume, or imply, coherence and consensus in practice, and offers examples of such a tendency evident in Wenger's (1998) framework 'vocabularies' (e.g., 'a sense of joint enterprise', 'relationship of mutuality', 'shared repertoire of communal resources').

Similarly, other scholars also raise a common concern about the tendency to reify the idea of community of practice to assume 'a sense of harmony, order and coherence with a positive, virtuous and consensual overtone' (Gherardi, Nicolini et al. 1998:278). As Gherardi et al. explain, this is because historically, the idea of a community is associated with that of a group of people who develop a common sharing. This tendency has already been picked up by Wenger (1998),

who assumes that people in organisations contribute to organisational goals by participating inventively in practices (Wenger, 1998). This assumption privileges a somewhat ‘positive’ discourse of CoPs that tends to imply a sense of mutuality and sharing. It runs the risk of overlooking the situations where people are not particularly interested in contributing to organisational goals or where organisational goals are in conflict with practical interests that are not at organisational level.

Hong and Fiona (2009) indicate that the notion of community of practice seems to emphasise the ease with which community members share somewhat sticky or tacit knowledge through joint practices.

Moreover, some scholars criticise Wenger’s (1998) framework of CoPs on the grounds that he does not think through the issues of power and conflict that are so suggestively prominent in Lave and Wenger’s (1991) original (e.g., Fox, 2000, Roberts, 2006). As Contu and Willmott claim, the popularised notion of CoPs is refined by a managerial preoccupation with the fulfilment of corporate objectives, often displacing the critical elements of the original thinking. This limitation is implied in the managerial position adopted in Wenger’s study (1998) that stresses the active role of management in designing learning as an enabling factor for organisational performance and taking charge of it.

2.4.3 PRACTICE-BASED THEORISING

By defining learning as participation in practice, the practice-based

perspective re-draws attention to the differences between the cognitive discourses on learning and social discourses on learning (Gherardi, 2000). It is argued that learning takes place in the flow of experience in everyday practices, with or without our awareness of it (ibid). Gherardi (2000) further argues that participation in practice is not only a way to acquire knowledge in-action, but also a means of changing or perpetuating such knowledge to produce and reproduce society. This echoes Gherardi et al.'s view (1998) that every practice is dependent on the social processes through which it is sustained and perpetuated, and that learning takes place through the engagement in that practice.

Under the practice-based perspective, the notion of 'practice' is re-identified as 'a system of activities in which knowing is not separate from doing' (Gherardi, 2000). This conceptualisation emphasises three elements: practice as work—transformation of a given work process; practice as language (professional language and interaction within a given work process; practice as morality (politics and power of the different groups or social classes involved in a given work process) (ibid). Moreover, Gherardi (2000) stresses the view that practice has the capacity to articulate spatiality – the context that transforms identity, activity, and social relations (Brown and DuGuid 1991; Lave and Wenger 1991; Cook and Yanow 1993; Wenger 1998), as well as to connect knowing with doing. Gherardi (2001) further re-identifies 'a practice' as the boundary of a domain of knowing and doing, arguing

that learning is enacted within practice. In this respect, Gherardi's notion of practice (2000) extends the understanding of the concept of 'practice' as well as its relationship to learning, following Lave and Wenger (1991), and Wenger (1998).

An important difference of the practice-based perspective from the community of practice-based perspective as reviewed in Section 2.4.2 rests on its tendency to avoid interpreting the notion of communities of practice with a sense of harmony. Rather, it supports Gherardi et al.'s (1998) proposition that communities of practice do not necessarily convey the sense of harmony or closeness which identify communities of practice themselves, but rather need to be perceived just as one form of organising (p. 278). While they stress the term 'practice' rather than the term 'community', Gherardi et al. (1998) use the notion of CoPs to refer to the intertwining relationship between knowledge, activity and social relations. Moreover, these authors introduce the concept of 'situated curriculum' to address the pattern of learning opportunities available to newcomers in their encounter with a specific community based on an ethnographic study in a construction site organisation. (Gherardi, Nicolini et al. 1998).

Gherardi and Nicolini (2000) contribute to the practice-based theorising on learning and knowing by studying how learning about safety emerges in three different communities of practice (engineers, site managers and prime contractors) internal to a medium-sized cooperative building firm.

The focus of their inquiry is on discourse on safety as a practice; in other words, as a way of 'doing'. What they discover about the members of these different communities of practice, who meet for a period of time in order to analyse a problem or to prepare a project, is that they form a discursive community and activate a situated discursive practice - 'a mode of ordering which produces a body of knowledge shared by the communities involved' (Gherardi and Nicolini 2000:24). This enables them to compare different perspectives of their worlds. Through such discursive practice, these groups of people come to realise that they are, and will remain, isolated, different, non-communicating, and even conflictive. The main argument drawn from the above finding is that learning in a constellation of interconnected practices is brokering activity situated in a discursive practice which relates situated bodies of knowledge to the minimum extent necessary to 'perform' the community (Gherardi and Nicolini 2000).

On the one hand, the above three different approaches to OL studies (LPP-based theorising, CoPS-based theorising and practice-based theorising) have made a significant contribution to the OL literature from situated learning perspectives. This they have done by commonly drawing attention to the deeply imbedded connection between learning and social engagement. On the other hand, these approaches are also limited in their insights into the impact of the wider issues of organisations on learning patterns. They are also limited in their

depiction of the variety of such impacts between different organisation groups. This is because the above approaches tend to focus on a single occupational group sharing similar cultures and norms, examples of which are seen in Lave and Wenger (1991); Cook and Yanow (1991) and Gherardi et al, (1998), as highlighted by Hong and Fiona (2009). Meanwhile, some scholars remind us that neither learning nor organisational learning is necessarily a consistent and struggle-free process. This is particularly so when we take into account the issue of power (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Fox, 2000; Contu & Willmott, 2003; Raz & Fadlon, 2006). As other scholars have commented, the issue of power has not been sufficiently emphasised in the stream of OL literature mentioned above (Easterby-Smith, Snell et al. 1998; Blackler and McDonald 2000; Antonacopoulou 2006).

In the next section, the review of the literature focuses on bringing together the main concerns about the issue of power surrounding learning in the field of OL studies.

2.5 POWER–BASED THEORISING

In the present review, I group the strand of studies focusing on the issue of power in relation to learning under the category of ‘power–based theorising’. This approach covers studies that adopt more critical thinking about the discourse on OL from situated learning perspectives. This is achieved by taking account of the issues of power, different

interest groups, and potential conflict within and across organisations as well as their influence on the underlying processes of learning.

I start by highlighting three influential voices that both speak to and speak of power in organisations adopted in the management literature. The first two influential voices are named as the functionalist and the critical perspectives according to Hardy and Clegg's categorisation (1996). In the above authors' view, these two perspectives represent the two dominant voices on power in the mainstream of management literature. The third voice is a relative neutral perspective on power propounded by Hardy (1996), who deliberately defines power in neutral terms in the following way: 'it is a force that affects outcomes' (p.S3).

2.5.1 POWER IN ORGANISATIONS – THREE INFLUENTIAL VOICES

According to Hardy and Clegg (1996) in the mainstream management literature, there are two dominant perspectives on power that have shaped the current work on power in organisations: the critical and functionalist perspectives. The critical perspective stems from the work of Marx and Weber, and represents the source of a remarkably diverse body of power literature. Based on their work on class structures and relations in (and of) production, Marx and Weber undertook a critical investigation of the processes whereby power was legitimated in the form of organisational structures. Conceptualising power as domination,

they perceived actions taken to challenge such power as constituting resistance to domination (Hardy and Clegg, 1996). In particular, Weber's notion of power (1978) as the ability to force others to do what you want them to do, if necessary, against their will, has provided a relatively common conceptualisation of power in organisations to the field of management studies. From this critical perspective, power is understood as being derived from the formal design of organisational structure and is legitimated by such a design. At the same time, a critical stance tends to hold the view that existing organisational arrangements are structures of domination. According to Gherardi (2006), while the founding fathers of power conceptualisation were interested in the processes through which power is legitimated in forms of domination (and resistance to it), management theorists who defined power perceived it in the form of legitimated organisational structures and functional authority. Management studies adopting a critical stance to power seek to explore how such power might be used to dominate and to serve specific interest groups by taking into account the existence of conflicting interests in organisations. For example, scholars like and Sims and Wallemacq (1998) argue that a key indicator of power in organisations (from a critical perspective) is about who has the right to tell stories. Different voices in organisations compete for dominance for the right/privilege to frame the organisational reality for others and to define meaning for all (Salzer-Morling 1998; Wallemacq and Sims

1998); some voices are louder than others (Coleman and Voronov 2008).

In particular, Hardy (1996) highlights three dimensions of power originally noted by Lukes (1974) that are particularly attractive to the mainstream management literature adopting the critical perspective. These three dimensions are: the power of resources, the power of processes and the power of meaning. As Hardy (1996) indicates, the power of resources is understood as the power exercised by dominant individuals and groups in organisations to influence decision outcomes. Power is used to bring about the desired behaviour through control and the development of key resources on which others depend (such as the resources of information, expertise, political access, credibility, stature and prestige, access to higher echelon members, and the control of money, rewards and sanctions). The power of processes is understood as the power residing in organisational decision-making processes which incorporate a variety of procedures and political routines that can be invoked by dominant groups to influence outcomes. This is achieved by preventing subordinates from participating fully in decision-making. As Hardy (1996) pointed out, the purpose of using this second dimension of power is often related to the dominant group's desire to protect the status quo in the organisation by mobilising the biases that are embedded in existing decision-making processes 'from behind the scenes' (p.7). The third dimension of power (the power of meaning)

refers to the power used to prevent conflict from emerging in the first place. This is accomplished by shaping perceptions, cognition and preferences so that individuals accept the status quo because they cannot imagine any alternative.

One common assumption underlying the conceptualisation of these three dimensions of power is that power is confronted with the issue of control and domination which advantages the interests of the dominant individuals or groups in organisations. Moreover, the use of these dimensions of power by dominant individuals and groups is typically associated with their desire for a change in their organisations – whether in respect to strategic directions, employees' behaviour, their perceptions, or all of these aspects.

The work of Tsoukas (1994) offered further insight into the power dimension from a critical perspective by revealing the essence of management. According to Tsoukas (1994), the essence of management is embodied through four main function domains: 'planning, organising, leading and controlling' (p.292). This essence is believed to define the management group's potential advantage of control and domination over their subordinates in terms of making important decisions for their organisations. Thus, Tsoukas (1994) asserted that management is endowed with three types of causal power that define the essence of management. These include 'the ability to control the transformation of labour potential to actual labour'; 'the ability to elicit the active

cooperation from subordinate members through the provision of material and symbolic rewards'; and 'the drive towards efficiency and effectiveness' (Tsoukas, 1994: 298). As Tsoukas noted further, such causal powers of management and their contingent exercising of such powers 'compel managers to plan, organise, lead and regulate' (p.298). At the same time, he asserted that managers must have delegated authority and discretionary rights over the integration of resources so that they can make a difference to the resources being combined and transformed. Tsoukas' (1994) work draws our attention to the underlying assumption about the essence of management through which the power of corporate managers is defined, granted and legitimised.

As can be seen, the above critical perspectives on power suggest the presence of power inequalities between management group and management subordinates; the essence of management is fundamentally designed to legitimise some individuals/groups in organisations through certain advantages (e.g. planning, organising, leading and controlling) over others. Clegg (1989) used the pool-table metaphor to illustrate such imbalanced power relationships from a critical perspective. As Clegg (1989) explained, the critical perspective on power assumes that the playing field is uneven for different players in organisations. Some players find themselves thrown into a game in which the playing field has been skewed to the benefit of some other players. This privilege makes it easier for the latter party to accomplish their particular goals.

In this respect, the critical perspective speaks of power with ‘a negative connotation’ (Hardy and Clegg 1996) as it emphasises the power of one party over another.

According to Hardy and Clegg (1996), the other dominant perspective on power in organisations in the context of management literature is the functionalist perspective. In contrast to the above critical perspective, the functionalist view of power speaks of managerial interests in order to help managers and elites attain their goals (e.g. overcoming resistance to change, attaining maximum productivity) (Coleman & Voronov, 2008). This power perspective tends to take for granted the ways in which power is distributed in formal, hierarchical organisational structures and considers management control as legitimate/normal and inevitable. This follows from the formal design of the organisation and is intended both to maintain a reasonable degree of order and efficiency in an organisation and to resolve potential conflicts with management subordinates (Coleman & Voronov, 2008). This implies that management power is hierarchical in nature. Because power through hierarchy is labelled ‘legitimate’, the underlying assumptions for the acceptance of its hierarchical nature are rarely articulated and even less frequently critiqued (Hardy & Clegg, 1996). For managerial interests, existing organisational arrangements are not considered as structures of domination, but formal, legitimate, and functional authority. Instead of defining power as a form of domination for the purpose of serving

specific interest groups, a functionalist perspective conceives it as ‘those actions that fell outside the legitimated structures, threatened organisational goals, and preserved a moral gulf between legitimate authority and illegitimate power’ (Hardy & Clegg, 1996: 758). Thus, from a functionalist point of view, the power exercised outside formal hierarchical structures of organisations is understood as a form of resistance, which is of an illegitimate and dysfunctional kind. Those management studies adopting a functionalist perspective are interested in theorising about power by examining how groups acquire and wield power that has not been granted to them under official bureaucratic arrangements. The functionalist perspective on power also has a negative connotation as it emphasises that power derived from outside the formal structure of an organisation is dysfunctional.

Gherardi (2006) summarises the two dominant voices on power in management literature; in the functionalist approach, power is a political ‘disorganising’ tool used by the opponents of managers. In contrast, in the critical approach, it is a means of domination, and resistance to it is an emancipatory tool. However, scholars like Hardy and Clegg (1996), and Silvia Gherardi suggest ‘it is time for both functionalists and critical theorists to pause’ (Hardy & Clegg, 1996: 636) and to look at power from a different point of view. According to Hardy and Clegg (1996), a third voice on power stems from the work of Foucault (1977; Foucault 1979), for whom ‘power represents a complex web of relations

determined by systems of knowledge constituted in discourse' (as summarised in Hardy & Clegg, 1996: 765). In this thesis, I do not wish to enter into a detailed analysis of Foucault's original work. I only recall the key points of Stephen Fox's (2000) representation of Foucault's idea of power. As Fox (2000) highlighted, Foucault (1984: 92) sees power as 'multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate'; 'force' (being tangible, involving material in its operation) is the way power acts, which is integral to action. Unlike the critical and functionalist perspectives on power, Foucault's conception of power suggests power is 'not a possession of some people who wield it over others, dominating and constraining them, but it is relational and productive' (Fox, 2000: 859). Fox (2000) also reminds us that power in Foucault's view, is 'omnipresent'; not because of any central authority, but because it comes from everywhere. Fox (2000) quoted Foucault's (1984) own words, 'the moving substrate of force relations which, by virtue of their inequality, constantly engender states of power, but the latter are always local and unstable' (Foucault, 1984: 93).

Rooted in the work of Foucault (1979; Foucault 1980; 1982), Hardy (1996) suggested a fourth dimension of power – the power of the system in relation to the three dimensions of power conceptualised in Lukes's (1974) work, as mentioned previously. Hardy's (1996) view of the fourth dimension of power draws on Foucault's emphasis of the power of system and the degree to which all individuals are limited in resisting,

much less transforming, this system. According to Hardy (1996), this dimension of power (the power of system) lies in the unconscious acceptance of the values, traditions, cultures and structures of a given institution and captures all organisational members in its web. Hardy's view of the fourth dimension suggests that power is not necessarily something that can be possessed only by dominant groups in organisations; it can also be well assigned to 'ordinary' individuals and groups. Hardy (1996) offers a relatively simplified conceptualisation of power based on Foucault's work, defining power as 'a force that affects outcomes' (p.3). According to Hardy (1996), this is a relatively neutral perspective on power which does not speak of power with a negative connotation.

The present study adopts a stance that is inclined more towards this relatively neutral and simplified definition of power as 'a force that affects outcomes' according to Hardy (1996). This relatively neutral stance may assist my study in maintaining an open and critical position with respect to the issue of power as different possibilities of understanding of the concept emerge during the research process.

As regards the current debate on the issue of power in the existing OL literature, it has been largely influenced by the critical perspective on power adopted in the management literature. In light of this, the rest of this review focuses on showing how the critical perspectives on power have been adopted in the field of OL research. The review also

highlights the potential problem arising from adopting such a perspective on power.

2.5.2 THE ISSUES OF POWER IN ORGANISATIONAL LEARNING

This subsection focuses on critically reviewing some of the key studies that address the issue of power explicitly or implicitly in the field of organisational learning. In particular, the review focuses on two strands of studies in this body of literature: a) studies focusing their inquiries on questioning and challenging the discourses on organisation learning research itself; b) studies focusing their inquiries on the conflicts of interests between different subgroups of the organisation and the complex interplay of power relations surrounding learning. In the following paragraphs, these two study strands are reviewed in turn.

The first study strand seeks to address the issue of power mobilised around learning in organisations by questioning and challenging the underlying assumptions about the discourses and practices of organisation learning research itself. Particular focus is placed on the biases in the popular subject of learning organisation. This approach fundamentally questions whose interests such discourses and practices should serve. It draws attention to the underlying privileged nature and legitimacy of management power that may potentially lead to domination and control over organisational learning processes. It warns us about the potential role played by management in manipulating as

well as revealing such underlying assumptions for the 'hidden' purpose of ideology control and domination. For example, Coopey (1994, 1995) suggests that scholars in the OL research field need to pay attention to two under-addressed questions: who is to determine the overall direction of the learning organisation? Whose knowledge should be privileged over others? These questions are potentially crucial in taking forward the discussions on issues of power in relation to learning. Coopey (1996) indicated that the existing discourse tends to treat organisational learning as an ideology of control for the management function, and overlooks the different interests within organisations.

The above critiques of Coopey's work (1994, 1995, 1996) introduce a critical stance on the conceptualisation of power to organisational learning studies. They serve to draw out the taken-for-granted issue of management domination and control in manipulating learning goals and influencing learning processes. In line with this critical thinking on power, further studies on organisational learning tend to suggest the view that corporate managers are in an advanced position over their subordinates in terms of shaping the decision-making process mobilised around the issue of learning in organisations. For example, Coopey (1998) studied how the issue of lack of trust between managers and employees damages the learning potential in private sector organisations in the UK. Coopey (1998) pointed out a number of common features among these organisations: short-term profit orientation; tight

organisational control and demand for higher levels of morality among employees; and the conforming role of some managers to pragmatic standards defined by top management, etc. These trust-related issues are believed to be fundamentally associated with imbalanced power relations in organisations (Coopey, 1998). The above author argues that corporate managers have considerable advantage over other stakeholders in terms of determining which interests should be served by an organisation; they 'produce meanings that obscure the web of asymmetrical power relations and the processes of control expressed through them' (p. 367). Thus, Coopey (1998) notes that the ideology and practices constituting management tend to undermine the foundations on which trust is built. As a consequence, the processes through which people become committed to an enterprise and those through which they learn and innovate are also undermined. Coopey (1998) points out that such advantage may also be seen in the technical experts and consultants that support managers, as well as other gurus who provide ideas that become twisted into corporate ideology. At the same time, the above author reminds us that such advantages of managers are treated as natural, cloaked by what Tsoukas (1994) refers to as the management mission of 'planning, organising, leading and controlling' (p.292) for the purpose of 'organisational effectiveness'.

Driver (2002) expresses a similar view that the manipulative discourse of LO may present a dominant coalition that determines the kind of

learning that is acceptable in a given organisational context. This echoes Coopey's (1998) view that the means of control and influence of management are not exercised through the explicit wielding of power and coercion, but translated into the routine disciplinary practices of everyday life. The above approach to theorising about power in organisational learning tends to suggest that the power relations mobilised around learning in organisations are relations between control and being controlled; between domination and obsession. Through these relations, management interest groups are able to take advantage of their legitimacy and authority. Individual stakeholders in an organisation are framed and positioned by a particular organisation ideology that privileges certain forms of knowledge (Coopey, 1998). They come readily to accept the truth and naturalness of the domination to which they are subject (ibid). Similarly, scholars like Coopey and Burgoyne (2000) acknowledge that pressures from the upper echelons of the organisation such as directors and experts may inhibit the will and ability of workers to engage effectively in the negotiation of meaning. However, at the same time, stakeholders cannot challenge the meanings on offer because they lack technical knowledge and expertise in the fundamental values and processes through which the corporation is governed and controlled (Deetz 1992).

Another important approach to addressing the issue of power in organisational learning literature draws attention to the organisational

dynamics of learning. This it does by exploring the interplay between conflicts of interest and between different intra-organisational occupational groups/communities as well as those in cross organisations. This body of literature reveals a more complex picture of power relations mobilised around learning activities in organisations. In those relations, managerial attempts to dominate and control learning (e.g. by promoting changes) hangs in the balance. Studies (e.g., Vince 2001; Raz and Fadlon 2006; Hong and O 2009) suggest that the difficulty in maintaining management power of control and domination is due to a number of struggles associated with conflict of interest issues, different constructions of identities, individuals and collective emotions as well as diverse organisational sub-cultures.

For example, the study by Russ Vince (2001) stemmed from psychodynamic theory and reflections on the politics of organising. The study drew our attention to the organisational dynamics of learning constructed from the interaction between emotion and power. One of Vince's (2001) main findings was that it was difficult to sustain and implement the initial managerial aspiration for learning due to the emotion and power relations generated through introduction of the change initiatives. This argument was based on a case study of the Hyder organisation, where Vince (2001) examined the development and implementation of two significant competing managerial initiatives ('Conc' initiative & 'one Hyder' initiative). The aim of the initiatives

was to increase staff participation and involvement in organisation change. One of the initiatives was introduced by senior managers in the Human Resources Department under the title: ‘create our new company’ (the Conc Initiative). This initiative focused on how to marry the very different management styles and organisational cultures represented in the previously separate organisations. The other initiative was a re-branding initiative called ‘one Hyder’, launched by corporate human resource staff in Group Development, a different business unit of the organisation. The initiative focused on shaping their commercial identity from the customers’ and stakeholders’ perspectives.

The findings of Vince (2001) revealed that tension and competition between the two change initiatives fundamentally mirrored the underlying tension between those managers who wanted to remain focused on the ‘core’ business of the company and those who wanted market ‘growth’. There was considerable anxiety and emotional pressure surrounding the expectations on both individual managers’ as the ‘person to deliver’ what one ought to achieve, as well as the commercial success of the organisation. It was also found that the emotions and politics generated around two competing organisational change initiatives were ignored and avoided in the company. This was because there was little or no communication about how these two initiatives might conflict with each other. In this respect, Vince’s (2001) study pointed out that although the Conc initiative was designed to

promote change within the company, it also led to reactions against change taking place within the company as a whole due to the tensions surrounding the initiative. Vince (2001) offered an initial sketch of a more complex picture of power relations mobilised around learning by indicating three interlinked organising processes in Hyder: a) organising for change took place in the context of strong emotional and political movement between two competing managerial initiatives; b) different political perceptions of these competing managerial initiatives led to division between the two parts of the organisation and avoidance of communication between them; and c) as the emotions and politics surrounding this difference became more entrenched, their distinctness needed to be protected and justified. In Vince's (2001) view, these interlinked organising processes led to the constructing of distinctive power relations surrounding the managerial initiatives in Hyder; cautions and control motivated by the fear of failure and reinforced by a fear of conflict.

Moreover, Vince (2001) highlights that the issue of emotion and power relations as identified in the Hyder case implies the existence of several interrelated tensions: between the idea of learning and its implementation; between empowerment and establishment; between learning at the individual level and learning at the organisational level; and between creating a new organisation and recreating the old one. These tensions emerged partially because the organising and managing

process in Hyder was undertaken in the context of a dynamic and confusing interplay between involvement and control; between attempting to change and endeavouring to remain the same, as Vince (2001) explains. He argues that cynicism about learning and change may occur when empowered individuals are confronted with the actual organisational power relations that block learning and change. As Vince (2001) further concludes, the tensions inherent in organising reflect the continuous pull between the desire to learn and the need to avoid learning, and the way in which desire and avoidance are played out in organisational processes.

The Hyder case can be argued to be a good example of an organisation in which senior management was doing much to support learning within the organisation. However, one lesson learned from Vince's (2001) study is that the use of management power to influence learning by organising change may not succeed due to the potential politics and emotions surrounding such intervention. This lesson may suggest that management does not necessarily possess as much power and advantage in terms of dominating and controlling the actual learning discourses and process as suggested by the critiques of learning organisation discourses. A further lesson implied in Vince's study (2001) is that the wielding of management power through the attempt to direct and organise learning seems to have an unexpected constraining effect on learning possibilities: considering anxiety at work; avoidance of

communication and interaction between different business units; and fear of failure and conflicts. Moreover, the recognition of the various tensions in Vince's (2001) study suggests that there is a series of struggles associated with the 'legitimised' form of management power in areas of organising and planning.

Similar concerns about the issue of conflicts of interests and tension surrounding learning are seen in a more recent ethnographic study of organisational learning by Raz and Fadlon (2005). They investigated the interplay between management ideology, its implementation of a teaching curriculum, and its interpretation of this teaching curriculum by medical school students and the physicians supervising these students in workshops at an Israeli medical school. Drawing from the perspective of symbolic interaction and social constructivism, Raz and Fadlon (2005) regarded organisational learning to be a practical accomplishment that takes place among and through other organisational members. They examined the social construction of organisation learning. In particular, their study explored the responses of the members of the organisation under examination to the management-imposed teaching curriculum that contradicted the basic assumptions about professional identity in medical practice.

One of their findings suggests that a situated curriculum of communication skills training emerged through the mutual engagement of students' responses, feedback from supervising physicians and

negotiations of communication teachers. In the situated curriculum, communication skills were conceived as both affective-communication skills with patients and instrumental-clinical knowledge leading to diagnosis and treatment. However, these two dimensions of situated learning curricular were perceived and interpreted differently in managerial and workplace cultures. According to Raz and Fadlon (2005), managerial culture designates the perceptions of management and its top-down messages, systems, norms and artifacts. In contrast, workplace culture encompasses the everyday practices of organisational life as seen from the members' points of view.

In this respect, Raz and Fadlon (2005) suggested that the emerging situated curriculum was in conflict with the teaching curriculum imposed by the management group of the medical school. This conflict was exemplified through the different orientations towards communication skills between the managerial and workplace cultures in the medical school under examination. In this respect, Raz and Fadlon (2005) suggested that the situated curriculum is a reflection of the difference (and possible conflicts) between managerial and workplace culture. They claimed that such conflicts may not be resolved in a simple or unidirectional manner. Their study concluded that the organisational dynamics unfold in a way that often retains cultural complexities and contradictions between the management and communities of practice, as well as among different communities of

practice in the same organisation.

In their interpretation of their empirical finding, Raz and Fadlon (2005) placed emphasis on the different perspectives of the social construction of the organisational learning processes through the lenses of managerial culture and workplace culture. However, their empirical findings revealed the conflicts of interests between the managerial culture orientation towards learning and the emerging workplace culture orientation, and the tension associated with them. As highlighted in Raz and Fadlon's (2005) study, the managerial culture requires a patient-oriented learning practice. In contrast, the workplace culture favours the emerging situated curriculum for clinical education with an emphasis on the disease-oriented practice approach (i.e., the use of communication skills for diagnosis and treatment of diseases rather than for effective communication with patients).

Although the issues of power were not implicitly addressed in relation to the conflicts of interests identified in Raz and Fadlon's study (2005), their work does offer important initial insights into the complexity of the interplay between different interest groups around the issue of learning in an organisation, and the power relations that underpin it. The present review provides an attempted articulation of such insights afforded from Raz and Fadlon's study. The emergence of the situated curriculum for clinical education in the face of senior management's intervention through the imposing of a teaching curriculum suggests that the

legitimised power of management does not necessarily have an uninterrupted advantage of domination and control over its subordinates. Rather, management power hangs in a dynamic balance through the struggle between the implementation of a patient-oriented teaching curriculum and the emerging disease-oriented situated curriculum.

The empirical insights of Raz and Fadlon echo the view of scholars like Contu and Willmott (2003), and Coopey (1995; 1998; 2000); namely that it is important to pay attention to the co-existence of different interest groups within the organisation in order to reveal the power relations mobilised around the issue of learning. As these scholars asserted, the various interest groups and their perspectives may lead to divergent expectations of learning and thereby lead to a number of underlying processes.

A very recent study by Hong & Fiona (2009) also touched on the issue of power in relation to learning by drawing our attention to the conflicting identities and power differentials between different communities of practice in an IT Department of an education institution in Macau, China. In particular, their study reported conflicting views regarding the identities of the in-house workers in that IT department and the outsourcing staff for the department. The former members regarded the latter as a cheap and easy human resource for performing routine tasks, whereas the latter considered themselves to be

professionals and mobile technicians. Also found was that a degree of power inequalities between the in-house staff and outsourcing staff mobilised the conflicting views on identity because the former was given the power of supervision and control of the latter, as well as the authority to make decisions. For example, as Hong and Fiona (2009) indicated, in daily review meetings, outsourcing staff felt that they were reporting, like juniors, to the in-house staff instead of engaging in a more interactive mutual communication. According to Hong and Fiona (2009), this example indicates that power groups can dictate how and to what extent participants with more inferior power can fully participate in a given community of practice. Most importantly, they found that the significant identity gap between these working groups and the power inequalities between them presented challenges in obtaining outsourcing staff's full willingness to cooperate with in-house workers to participate in the daily work activities in the IT department. In Hong and Fiona's view, these challenges were the obstacles to organisational learning, a collective learning process essentially related to knowledge sharing and full participation. Their paper concluded that such a seamless process was caused by identity conflicts and power inequalities, the problems and causes of which had a negative impact on the establishing of a learning community.

As the above recent empirical studies on organisational learning have revealed, there is an extremely complex and ambiguous interplay

between different interest groups around the issue of learning in an organisation. The power relations involved are not always as clear as claimed in the reviewed organisational learning literature - a seemingly simple advantage of domination and control of management interest group over its subordinates. Alongside the attempt to control and dominate by the management interest groups, there co-exists a trend for underlying movements, often emergent, that are effectively resistant to the 'legitimate' form of management power. These movements determine the 'actual' meaning and actions of learning that really matter to people who care more about the very process of engaging in practice than learning in the form of organisational ideology. Thus, tension exists between the legitimate form of management power and the emergent force that works against the legitimacy of management power. Moreover, this tension may eventually lead to conflicts around the issue of learning.

To some extent, the complexity of power relations as reviewed in the above OL studies can be linked back to Lave and Wenger's (1991) original remarks on the framework of situated learning. As Contu and Willmott (2003) reminded us, Lave and Wenger (1991) understand learning processes as being integral to the exercise of power and control, rather than external or unrelated to the operation of power. However, this is a point that has been gradually suppressed or ignored in the fads and fashions of the OL research field. As Contu and Willmott (2003)

further pointed out to us, the original SLT considered power in connection with ‘social organization of and control over resources’ (L&W, p. 37). Moreover, the operation of such power is argued to have dual impacts – to enable or to constrain/deny access to communities of practice and influence a degree of legitimacy upon novices as the normal condition of participation in learning processes. In Lave and Wenger’s (1991) study, such dual faces of power are exemplified through their notion of legitimate peripherality, which is considered as a complex phenomenon implicated in social structures involving relations of power. They argued that legitimate peripherality can be seen either as a source of empowerment that facilitates a more intensive move towards participation; or as a disempowering position that keeps people from participating more fully. In this respect, Lave and Wenger linked their concept of power to the potential conflict inherent in social practice and identity formation between the forces that support learning and those that work against them (p.57). Although Lave and Wenger’s notions of power also emphasised the social organisation of and control over resources, their concept of power does not limit our understanding to a negative connotation of power; rather, it draws attention to the different faces of power.

2.6 LIMITATIONS IN THE EXISTING ORGANISATIONAL LEARNING LITERATURE

Despite the ongoing interest in exploring the nature of learning and learning patterns from different situated learning perspectives, our understanding of learning in organisations still requires expansion and enrichment. This section highlights the limitations in the existing OL literature as reviewed above and then suggests three particular research problems that the present study aims to investigate further.

Firstly, although many of the available studies have offered important insights into our understanding of learning as a social and cultural phenomenon, these insights focus on conceptualising the situated characteristics of learning at a general level, rather than exploring the specific situated learning activities that might be involved in a given organisational context and how such learning activities may become possible.

Secondly, despite the emerging different OL studies from situated learning perspectives on theorising learning patterns in various organisational contexts, each approach has its own limitations. These limitations make it difficult to apply their analysis directly to explain how learning may arise in a different organisational context beyond that of the original investigation.

For example, as indicated in Section 2.4.1, Lave and Wenger's (1991) LPP-based theorising may be somewhat limited in explaining the learning phenomenon in a formally structured work organisation. In

such a context, the situations and social practices involved are possibly more complex than those considered in the work context of apprenticeships.

The CoPs-based theorising approach has raised similar concerns, namely, that it cannot be easily translated into organisation learning studies (Fox, 2000) because it has a tendency to imply consent and harmonious social relationships in a given community (Gherardi, Nicolini et al. 1998; Gherardi 2009). As a consequence, it may overlook the dynamic social norms and potential conflicts and tensions involved within an organisation. In this respect, CoPs-based theorising may be limited in explaining the issues of power that were so suggestive in the early stages of SLT (Contu & Willmott, 2000; 2003). Hong and O (2009) indicates that one cause of the above limitations may be the fact that previous research has often focused on a single occupational group sharing idiosyncratic cultures and norms (e.g., as seen in Lave & Wenger, 1991; Brown & Duguid, 1991; Cook & Yanow, 1993; Ghearardi et al., 1998).

In respect of the power-based theorising approach, although this approach helps to address some of the limitations in the early strands of OL research from situated learning perspectives, it has its own limitations. Being influenced by the critical perspective on power adopted in management literature, the current debate on power appears to have a negative connotation. This negative tone is shown either

through its emphasis on the controlling and potentially coercive aspects of management causal powers (e.g. Coopey, 1995, 1998; Easterby-Smith, 1997; Coopey & Burgoyne, 2000; Driver, 2002) or through its emphasis on the struggles or tensions associated with management-attempted intervention in learning (Vince, 2001; Raz & Fadlon, 2005; Hong & O, 2009). Because each approach is aspectual, focusing on particular aspects of power at the expense of our understanding of others (Coleman & Voronov, 2008), this limitation may undermine our understanding of potentially different faces of power. In particular, there is a relative lack of systematic investigation into the influence of management-attempted intervention on learning as well as the power relations mobilised around such influence. At the same time, although studies (e.g. Blackler & McDonald, 2000; Fox, 2000) drawing on Foucault's thinking of power offer a more complex view of power in relation to learning, they tend to be theoretically deductive. Overall, there is a relative lack of conceptualisation of power in relation to situated learning derived from empirically-based studies.

In summary, the limitations in the existing OL literature are threefold: a) there is a relative lack of more detailed exploration of specific situated learning activities that might be involved in the context of formal work organisations. This is especially the case when taking account of the different interest groups and divergent social norms of practices involved; b) the initial critical thinking on the issue of power and

struggle aspects of learning, so suggestively highlighted in Lave and Wenger's (1991) situated learning theory, has been considerably ignored or marginalised. This has arisen through the emergence of more 'popularised' versions of situated learning theory with their implied tendency to emphasise the consensus aspects of a community of practice (e.g., Brown & Duguid, 1991; Wenger, 1998) and collective aspects of learning (e.g. Cook & Yanow, 1993; Yanow, 2000) in work organisations; c. there is a tendency to examine power with a negative connotation in the existing OL literature. This is particularly evident with respect to the controlling and potentially coercive role of management and its problematic impacts on learning possibilities. Such tendency may inhibit the complexity of power issues surrounding learning in organisations.

2.7 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH

OBJECTIVES

Based on the above review of the OL literature from situated learning perspectives, the present study identifies three particular research issues in the field of OL research that require further exploration. These form the broad research questions of the present study: 1. What are the potential learning activities entailed in a different, under-explored, context of organisation? 2. How could these learning activities arise in such an under-explored organisational context? 3. How would

managerial intervention influence learning in such an organisational context? The present research aims to further investigate the topic of OL research from situated learning perspectives by seeking answers to the above research questions. In the next chapter (Chapter 3), I offer justifications for the methodological choices made for the purpose of conducting this research as well as descriptions of the research processes.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

As indicated in Chapter 2, three broad research issues in the field of OL research require further exploration: 1. What are the potential learning activities entailed in a different, under-explored, context of organisation? 2. How could these learning activities arise in such an under-explored organisational context? 3. How would managerial intervention influence learning in such an organisational context? These issues establish the broad research questions of the present study.

The main purpose of this chapter is to clarify and justify the methodological choices arising in relation to exploration of these three research questions and to spell out the process in which the study is conducted. Fundamentally, two in-depth case studies were conducted in two theatre producing organisations through a qualitative research approach. In-depth interviews, observations and documentary analysis for data collection were utilised to address the research question. I chose to study theatre producing organisations because these types of organisation are relatively less explored in the field of organisational learning research. In addition, they have the tradition of relying on context-specific professional skills and work practices that are highly situated. In these respects, theatre producing organisations may offer

new or different insights that may not have been captured in the existing organisational learning literature. These methodological choices are elaborated in detail in the rest of this chapter.

The remainder of this chapter is structured in the following way: Section 3.2 discusses and clarifies the research approach. Section 3.3 clarifies the research design of case studies and justifies the choice of theatre producing organisations as research sites. Section 3.4 explains the methods adopted for data collection in this study, while Section 3.5 justifies the choices of methods used in this study for data analysis. Section 3.6 reports on the processes involved in the conducting of the case studies. Section 3.7 clarifies the ways in which the case studies are reported. Section 3.8 discusses issues related to the evaluation of the quality of research. Finally, Section 3.9 provides reflection on the researcher's role as part of the research process and the power relations around learning mobilised by the researcher's role.

3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

This research follows a qualitative research approach in order to gain further understanding of the learning phenomenon in organisations from social perspectives. The study adopts an epistemological position with the view that knowledge is socially constructed and that we are in a world of multiple constructed realities. The nature of qualitative research is to provide detailed understanding and interpretations of such

multiplicity and complexity. It values the subjective representation of various versions of ‘reality’ between different researchers rather than seeking quantification, generalisation or objectivity. In the rest of this section, I justify the choice of the qualitative research approach adopted and then discuss various epistemological stances related to qualitative inquiry before clarifying the one adopted in this study.

3.2.1 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH VERSUS QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

According to Silverman (1997), there are no principled grounds on which to select a qualitative or quantitative research approach; it all depends upon the nature of the researched problem and pragmatic issues that matter to the inquiry of such. Merriam (2002) suggests that for research which aims at understanding a phenomenon, uncovering the meaning a situation has for those involved, or delineating process (how things happen), a qualitative design would be most appropriate. Following this broad line of thought, the present study adopts a qualitative research approach for reasons elaborated below.

A broad objective of the study is to gain further understanding of the learning phenomenon in organisations from social perspectives by undertaking investigation in a relatively under-addressed organisational context: producing theatre companies. This research objective requires close examination of learning in relation to the immediate context and

situations where such learning emerges. This research objective reflects Remenyi et al.'s (1998: 35) argument that qualitative research is about the investigation of 'the details of the situation to understand the reality or perhaps a reality working behind them'.

In this respect, the researcher considers a qualitative rather than a quantitative approach to investigating the research issues to be more appropriate than a quantitative because the latter places emphasis on understanding of 'the qualities of entities and on processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured in terms of quantity, amount, intensity, or frequency' (Denzin and Lincoln 2003:3). As Flyvbjerg (2004) notes, the main advantage of qualitative research lies in its ability to provide us with insight into local practices because the nature of such research, as Merriam (2002) claims, lies in meanings that are socially constructed by individuals in association with their world. It allows us to see the world through multiple constructions and interpretations of reality that are in flux and that change over time. This particular strength of the research approach supports the researcher's main interest in understanding the socially constructed meanings of learning and its patterns as well as the possibilities through which such learning patterns arise in a given organisational context.

In addition, by adopting a qualitative research approach, the study echoes the call of those scholars in the field of OL research who emphasise the need to move beyond traditional positivist methods by

advocating greater use of qualitative methods (Miner and Mezias 1996). This claim was made with reference to the potential complexity of learning processes and the ‘significance of human contact within a social setting as the driver and substance of organisational learning’ (Easterby-Smith, Crossan et al. 2000).

3.2.2 EPISTEMOLOGICAL STANCE

The issues of researcher’s epistemological, ontological and methodological premises are sometimes discussed as netted aspects known as ‘a paradigm’ or ‘an interpretive framework’, a ‘basic set of beliefs that guides action’ (Guba 1990:17). The present study adopts a constructivist-interpretive paradigm, according to Denzin and Lincoln’s categorisation (2005). This particular paradigm ‘assumes a relativist ontology (there are multiple realities), a subjectivist epistemology (knower and respondent co-create understanding), and a naturalistic (in the natural world) set of methodological procedures’ (Lukes 1974). This means that research drawn on the basis of the interpretive paradigm adopts a critical stance towards taken-for-granted knowledge (conventional knowledge that is based upon objective, unbiased observation of the world). It assumes that the ways in which we understand the world are historically and culturally specific.

In this respect, the present study adopts the position that knowledge is socially constructed and that we are in a world of multiple constructed

realities. The nature of qualitative research is to provide detailed understanding and interpretations of such multiplicity and complexity. It values the subjective representation of various versions of ‘reality’ between different researchers rather than seeking quantification, generalisation or objectivity. Given this assumption of reality, there is no ultimate benchmark for judging the true value of any claim (Lincoln and Guba 1985). The present study’s choice of underlying theoretical position is supported by Deetz (1992), who states that ‘theory is a way of seeing and thinking about the world. As such, it is better seen as the “lens” one uses in observation than as a “mirror” of nature’ (1992: 66).

Thus, this research is not designed and conducted in order to obtain ‘objective’ knowledge, but rather to seek to provide one way of interpreting and perceiving. The researcher does not intend to provide a generalised form of theory by acknowledging that knowledge obtained from this piece of research is both time and context bounded.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN – CASE STUDY

I uses the design of in-depth case studies as an overall research strategy to further explore the identified research questions in the relatively less explored organisational contexts – theatre producing organisations. Two theatre producing organisations in the UK, the Dream Theatre and the Rainbow Theatre (the real names of these two companies are replaced for reasons of confidentiality), were selected as the two case companies

for investigation. The remainder of this section justifies these research design choices by focusing on four questions: what is case study useful for? What is a case study? Why have theatre producing organisations been selected as the research site for the case study? How were the cases selected?

3.3.1 WHAT IS CASE STUDY USEFUL FOR?

According to Eisenhardt (1989), case study is a research strategy which focuses on understanding the dynamics present within single settings. In this research, case study is the favoured research strategy because case knowledge is argued to be central to human learning (Gragg 1940; Christensen 1987; Flyvbjerg 2006). As a consequence, case study can serve the exploratory needs of qualitative research by identifying new concepts and initiating interpretations (Platt 1988). The choice of case study as a preferable research strategy is supported by those scholars (Eisenhardt 1989; Ghauri 2004) who argue that case study is particularly well-suited to new research areas or research areas for which existing theory seems inadequate. As Gerring (2004) further reveals, one of the primary virtues of the case study method is the depth of analysis that it offers, referring to the detail, richness, completeness, wholeness, or degree of variance that is provided by an explanation. As indicated previously, the existing frameworks and theories on situated learning are somewhat inadequate in shedding light on existence of specific learning patterns in a given organisational setting and how such learning

becomes possible or influenced in such a setting. As a consequence of its above-mentioned benefits, the adaptation of the case study strategy offers a unique advantage for exploring these under-addressed research issues.

3.3.2 WHAT IS A CASE STUDY?

Before explaining the design and conducting of my case study, it is important to clarify how the term ‘case study’ is used in the present study because the use of the term varies considerably across disciplines with different paradigms.

As Gerring (2004) indicates, the term ‘case study’ is a definitional morass because different researchers hold divergent views about the nature of case study (Platt 1988; Klein 1989) and how it should be conducted (Yin 1984; Platt 1988). For example, Stake (1995) views qualitative case study as highly personal and inevitably subjective research despite the researcher’s intention to minimise their intrusion. Stake argues further that as the primary use of case study is not to generalise to other cases, it is not necessarily reproducible for other cases and researchers. In contrast, researchers who draw more on the conventions of positivism or the quantitative research approach (Yin 1984; Benbasat, Goldstein et al. 1987; Lee 1989) tend to associate case study with generating hypothesis or theory testing.

Gerring (2004) summarises various ways of understanding case study:

a) as a qualitative method based on small samples (Yin 1984); b) as ethnographic and clinical research, using participant or observation, or otherwise ‘in the field’ (Yin 1984); c) as research characterised by process-tracing (George and Bennett. 2004); d) as investigation of the properties of a single case (Eckstein 1975); or e) as investigation of a single phenomenal instance or example – the most common usage (Gerring 2004).

However, Gerring (2004) asserts that none of the listed views is appropriate as a general definition for the methodology per se. According to his view, the first three definitions (a-c) imply ‘a substantial shift in meaning relative to established usage’ (p. 342) in describing certain kinds of sub-cases rather than general phenomena. He claims the fourth definition, (d), is flawed because, as his further arguments suggest, case study always employs more than one case. The fifth notion, (e), in Gerring’s view, is definitively correct, albeit too ambiguous. The notion does not address the ‘bounded nature’ of a case study. Based on the above critiques, Gerring (2004) proposes a definition of case study as ‘an intensive study of a single unit for understanding of a large class of (similar) units’. In his view, a unit connotes a spatially bounded phenomenon observed at a single point in time or over some delimited period.

Despite the existence of numerous views of case study, there is a fair degree of consensus with respect to the definition of a case study as ‘a

bounded system’ and an understanding that it will be ‘a single case studied intensively’ (Platt 1988:4). This study adopts a more comprehensive answer to the question of ‘what is a case study?’, as noted by Punch (1986) as follows:

‘The basic idea is that one case (or perhaps a small number of cases) will be studied in detail, using whatever methods seem appropriate. While there may be a variety of specific purposes and research questions, the general objective is to develop as full an understanding of that case as possible’ (p.150).

Before moving on to case selection, it is important to first justify the reasons for the selection of theatre producing organisations as the research sites in this particular study.

3.3.3 WHY HAVE THEATRE PRODUCING ORGANISATIONS BEEN SELECTED AS THE RESEARCH SITE FOR THE CASE STUDY?

The selection of theatre producing organisations as suitable research sites for exploring the research questions of this study was both an intuitive choice and a theoretical and empirical choice. Before expanding on each of these modes of choosing, a brief introduction to the background of the theatre industry is provided.

3.3.3.1 background information on the theatre and the theatre industry

In the study, I use the term ‘theatre producing organisations’ to refer to

producing theatres (PT) as opposed to *presenting theatres* (the latter typically have little or no involvement in the design and production of the shows that they present). According to Voss, Cable et al. (2000), producing theatres are often resident in a permanent theatre space and are involved in intensive, ongoing new theatre product development. A PT is responsible for everything from assembling the design and acting teams (which typically change for each play) to the physical construction of the sets (which also change for each play). For each play, a PT creates self-organising teams including directors, designers, actors, and production staff that provide direct support for the production-making process (e.g. stage management, costume making, sound and lighting technical support).

Production-making activities are the key range of practices that distinguish a theatre producing organisation from another type of organisation. A theatre producing organisation is usually governed by a board of directors comprising members of the organisation. It normally has a formal organisational structure featuring a number of functional departments responsible for day-to-day business running (e.g. Marketing Department, Finance Department). However, such leadership is usually divided into the artistically-driven approach and the business/managerial-driven approach. In this respect, a theatre producing organisation conjoins artistic practices and business practices under one broad organisational structure.

A theatre producing organisation is often run on a non-profit basis. The sources of income mainly come through donation from individuals and public domains, and partially from ticketing. As a result, these organisations usually employ people with relevant experience and skills and offer limited training opportunities on the job. This recruitment principle is particularly adopted for those practices closely associated with production making.

3.3.3.2 an intuitive choice

The idea of considering theatre organisations as an entry-point into the existing OL debate came to me in the first year of my research. It was initially inspired by a theatre artistic director who was invited as guest speaker to one of the doctoral conferences on OL that I attended in Manchester. Interestingly, this artistic director spoke about how learning and knowledge embody theatre-making activities and how valuable they are to a theatre company. During the conference, the delegates were also invited to his theatre to watch a play, and to sense and feel theatre playing as an audience. Most importantly, the conference delegates were encouraged to reflect on the problem of OL through the lens of what we perceived as theatrical practice. At the time, I believed intuitively that theatre organisations may possibly be an interesting site for OL research.

3.3.3.3 a theoretical and empirical choice

By searching both OL literature and general background information on theatre management after the conference, I began to identify both theoretical and empirical reasons for further investigating the situated learning phenomenon in theatre organisations. The theoretical reasons for this choice are explained below.

Firstly, the importance of theatre organisations to OL studies lies in its embodiment of situated learning. Although the topic of theatre has not been particularly studied from the perspective of theatre as a form of organisation, some literature on the ‘cultural or creative industry’ studies (Voss, Cable et al. 2000; Chambers 2004) have touched on the issue of theatre management and have highlighted some key issues featuring the types of organisations in cultural/creative industries, which include theatre organisations.

For example, Voss, Cable et al. (2000) indicate that the practices involved in the process of producing a play are precisely situated in the specific context of making each theatre production. This is because these practices are often tailored to the specific requirements implied in a given socially-historically embedded written script and a particular artistic inspirational approach adopted by a given creative team. In this respect, the potential learning activities involved in such organisations cannot be easily codified or transmitted out of their immediate context. The situated feature of production-making activities as noted in Voss, Cable et al. (2000) may suggest that theatre organisations are a rich

context for the study of situated learning activities.

This suggestion finds supporting evidence in Thorsby (2001), who asserts that in cultural/creative industries, 'leaning-on-the-job' plays a more significant role than learning through formal training within a given organisation. However, it is argued that such learning activities are poorly understood. Moreover, there is considerable uncertainty not only about how to detect them, but also about how to replicate them (Lampel, Lant et al. 2000).

Secondly, a theatre organisation is argued to operate with an almost inevitable tension between artistic-led values and managerial efficiency. As Chambers (2004) argues, in any creative project in theatres, a tension exists throughout all the processes required to find organisational forms for artistic expression. This tension persists because of the impulse to challenge, to push the boundaries, and to resist the constraints of institution. As some scholars point out, creative organisations have been described as paradoxical (Lampel, Lant et al. 2000; Jones, Anand et al. 2006; DeFillippi, Grabher et al. 2007) and functioning with hybrid identities (Albert and Whetton 1985; Glynn 2000).

In this respect, the present study considers that such tension and conflicting interests are potentially linked to the current debate on power in OL research, particularly with respect to the issue of legitimacy of participating in theatre-producing practices. The exercise of power

possibly becomes an inevitable intervention if the issue of tension, conflict and misunderstanding is overriding the efficiency of the organisation or its subunits. Therefore, with its typical characteristic of tension, the domain of theatre producing organisations may provide a rich context to further explore the issue of power and conflict.

Thirdly, theatre producing organisations may also provide a suitable research site for taking into account different social norms and their diverse influence in a given work organisation. This is because theatre producing organisations seem to have multi-faceted organising structures – possibly a complex mix of community or practice-based work (Wenger 1998; Sense and Badham 2008), project-based work (‘highly time-bounded, various and discrete forms of activity’ described by Scarbrough, Swan et al. (2004), as well as team-based work. For example, Goodman and Goodman (1976) refer to the short-term task-based creative teams as ‘temporary systems’ because they typically are disbanded after each production, with a new team being assembled for each subsequent production. Choosing this multi-faceted organising system may allow the researcher to be exposed to more social norms, their relations and most importantly, their potential influence on the underlying learning activities.

Turning to the empirical reason for choosing theatre producing organisations as a research site, this particular type of organisation has been largely overlooked in the existing OL literature. This is because

many of the available empirical studies tend to choose profit-organisations as their research sites. In this respect, studying theatre producing organisations as non-profit oriented organisations has the potential to generate new or different insights into the current debate.

As the above theoretical and empirical reasons show, the selection of theatre producing organisations as a research site for the present study follows what Flyvbjerg (2006) calls ‘extreme or deviant cases’ selection as an information-oriented case selection strategy. This is because theatre producing organisations as extreme/deviant cases in the field of OL research, are well suited to ‘obtain information on unusual cases, which can be especially problematic or especially good in a more closely defined sense’, according to Flyvbjerg’s notion of extreme or deviant cases (2006:230).

At specific levels, two producing theatre companies, the Dream Theatre and the Rainbow Theatre (the real names of these two companies are replaced for reasons of confidentiality), were eventually selected as the case companies for the present study because of their willingness to grant permission for access.

In the following section, I elaborate on the strategies for case selection adopted in this study.

3.3.3.4 Selection of cases

A number of scholars argue that the selection of case is a strategic

choice in qualitative studies. For example, Stake (1998) suggests selecting a case that is more likely to enhance understanding rather than the one most typical. At the same time, Stake also points out that although generalisation is not a primary interest of qualitative case study, it should not stop us from choosing more than one case for some comparison.

Bent Flyvbjerg (2006: 230) summaries two types of approach to case selection: ‘random selection’ and ‘information-oriented selection’. Random selection requires decisive sample size in order to avoid systematic biases for generation purpose. However, as Flyvbjerg (2006) points out, a representative case or a random sample may not be the most appropriate strategy if the research objective is to achieve the greatest possible amount of information on a given problem or phenomenon. This is because the typical or average case is often not the richest in information. In contrast, information-oriented case selection aims to maximise the utility of information from small samples or single cases. In other words, cases are selected based on expectations about their information context. Flyvbjerg (2006) names four types of case in this category: a) extreme/deviant cases; b) maximum variation cases; c) critical cases; and d) paradigmatic cases. The purpose of each type of information-oriented case is listed in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1 strategies for information-oriented case selection

Information-oriented case selection	Purpose
1. Extreme/deviant cases	To obtain information on unusual cases, which can be especially problematic or especially good in a more closely defined sense.
2. Maximum variation cases	To obtain information about the significance of various circumstances for case process and outcome (e.g. three to four cases that are very different in one dimension: size, form of organisation, location, and budget).
3. Critical cases	To achieve information that permits logical deductions of the type, 'if this is (not) valid for this case, then it applies to all (no) cases'.
4. Paradigmatic cases	To develop a metaphor or establish a school for the domain that the case concerns.

(Source: Flyvbjerg, 2006: 230)

Information-oriented case selection strategy in Flyvbjerg's (2006) sense is similar to the approach often referred to as 'theoretical sampling' in other scholars' work (e.g., Silverman 2006) or 'instrumental cases' (Glaser and Strauss 1967). For example, according to Mason (1996), 'theoretical sampling means ... selecting groups or categories to study on the basis of their relevance to your research questions, your theoretical position ... and most importantly, the explanation or account which you are developing' (1996:93). Similarly, Glaser and Strauss

(1967) argue that the objective of using instrumental cases is to fill theoretical needs rather than to represent the whole population.

The present study follows one of Flyvbjerg's (2006) case selection strategies and considers extreme/deviant cases as more suitable for the research objective. This is because it is argued that extreme/deviant cases 'can be well-suited for getting a point across in an especially dramatic way' and 'often reveal more information as they activate more actors and more basic mechanisms in the situation studies' (Flyvbjerg, 2006: 229). As the above author points out further, this is because extreme/deviant cases are potentially able to produce insights that shed light on the reasons behind a given problem and its consequences rather than just to provide descriptions of the symptoms of the problem. A slightly different emphasis on the strategy for case selection is suggested by Stake (1995), who argues that a primary principle of selection of individual case is to 'maximise what we can learn'.

In this respect, that theatre companies have become the research site is a desire to utilise extreme/deviant cases. In a broad sense, the rationale for such a choice is based on some general characteristics of producing theatre organisations: a) in such organisations, it is argued that 'learning-on-the-job' plays a more significant role than formal training (Thorsby, 2001); b) the work activities in such organisations seem to be arranged around two distinctive dimensions with each following its own sets of rules and values (production-oriented practice and business-

oriented practice). These general characteristics imply relatively complex and diverse organisational situations that may serve to activate more dimensions of learning and its possibilities.

However, at specific levels, the selection of individual cases of theatre companies was based on more practical reasons depending on their permissions for access. Two producing theatre companies, the Dream Theatre and the Magic Theatre (the real names of these two companies are replaced for reasons of confidentiality), were initially considered as particularly interesting following Stake's (1995) case selection strategy of maximising what we can learn. This was because the topic of learning was explicitly emphasised in both of its managerial discourses in a variety of ways. For example, at the time of selection, the executive director of the Dream made the commitment to lead the theatre towards the goal of becoming a learning organisation; and the artistic director of the Rainbow also stressed the important role played by learning in the process of making productions in the theatre. Such explicit emphasis on learning led the researcher to believe intuitively that these two theatre organisations may offer more insights into the issue of management influence on learning compared with others where there seemed to be no such explicit emphasis on learning.

However, the present study was not able to pursue the case of the Magic Theatre, due to issues of access. This led to the eventual choice of the

Rainbow Theatre as the second case study.

Unlike the initial selection of the case of Dream, which was based on the theatre's satisfying the information-oriented case selection, the reason for selecting the Rainbow was more practical in nature; the case was chosen 'simply because it allow[ed] access' (Reynolds 2000:163). The reason for the change in selection criterion was that following the Magic Theatre's withdrawal of interest in the research project after the commencement of the actual fieldwork stage, no other theatre company (apart from the Rainbow Theatre) approached by the researcher expressed willingness to permit fieldwork access. Although the case of Rainbow was selected mainly on the basis of accessibility, in the initial stages of making contact with the gatekeeper of the company, the researcher had 'detected' virtually no explicit emphasis on learning in this organisation. In light of this, the researcher concluded that this case had the potential in theory to offer different patterns of management issues from the case of the Dream.

The decision to include no more than two cases in the study was made for both theoretical and practical reasons. Two case studies are arguably adequate for providing the essential opportunity to discover and explore the research questions if the uniqueness and particularity of each case can be investigated in depth. As Pettigrew (1988) notes, given the limited number of cases which can usually be studied, it makes sense to select cases that seem 'observable'. As a doctoral student researcher, the

practicality of conducting a research project is largely regulated by the limited duration of the study period and constrained resources; therefore, a sample size that goes beyond two in-depth cases, ‘would probably be so large as to preclude the kind of intensive analysis usually preferred in qualitative research’ (Pfeffer 1981:91).

3.4 METHODS FOR DATA COLLECTION

This research combines the use of in-depth interviews, ethnographic observation and documentation as methods for data collection.

According to Silverman and Marvasti (2008: 147), ‘there are no right or wrong methods. There are only methods that are appropriate to your research topic and the model with which you are working.’ As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the research aims to explore three issues in the field of OL research that still require further development. The exploratory nature of the present research requires that the data collection should not be limited to a particular survey instrument or a set of variables (Reynolds 2000). Instead, the unique features of a qualitative research approach allow this study to gather data from different sources using a combination of multiple methods as mentioned above, which is a form of ‘methodological triangulation’ according to Mason (2006:25). The reason for each choice of data collection method is provided below.

3.4.1 IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW

Initially, I used semi-structured on the first few interviewing occasions as it has a relatively open structure and the capacity to present the research topic from the perspective of the interviewees. Moreover, it has the capacity to shed light on how and why they have come to this particular perspective (King 2004).

However, after undertaking the first few interviews, a semi-structured interview style was replaced with an in-depth interview approach, a traditional type of unstructured interview (Fontana and Frey 2003). This was done to elicit rich, detailed material for in-depth understanding of the local context or complex issues within which the research phenomenon was located (Lofland 1971). The change in interview approach was necessary because the initial interviewing experience revealed that following the predesigned structure could limit the chances of capturing the richness of information and emerging perspectives from ‘the insider’s point of view’. One of the key issues in this study is to ‘capture’ learning involved in the organisation under examination from the ‘insider’s point of view’ to attain a ‘deep’ understanding of their work practices and the local context where these practices were embedded. This type of focus of inquiry requires a more flexible and open-minded method for data collection. In-depth interview is an appropriate method for this particular research need. As Fontana and Frey (1995; 2000) note, unstructured interviewing attempts to

understand the complex behaviour of members of society without imposing any a priori categorisation that may limit the field of inquiry. I will further elaborate on this point in Section 3.6.3 – Collecting Evidence.

The in-depth interview style also matches the epistemological stance adopted in this study, namely, that there are multiple ‘versions’ of reality of the social world. In this respect, the study does not view interviews as a means for providing the ‘mirror reflection’ of the reality existing out there. Instead, interviews are used exclusively as an interaction between the interviewer and interviewee, who mutually create and construct narrative versions of the social world reality, following Silverman’s view (1997). Moreover, this study echoes Miller and Glassner’s caution (1997) that interview is only meaningful within the context in which it occurs. Accordingly, this research chose to use the interview method to gather data in order to gain insights within the interview context rather than to discover the world existing beyond the interview accounts.

3.4.2 ETHNOGRAPHIC OBSERVATION

Ethnography is the study of people in naturally occurring settings or ‘fields’ by means of data collection methods that capture their social meanings and ordinary activities. These methods involve the researcher directly in the setting, if not also the activities, enabling them to collect

data in a systematic manner (Brewer 2000). According to Delamont (2004), participant observation, ethnography and fieldwork are all used interchangeably... they can all mean spending long periods watching people, coupled with talking to them about what they are doing, thinking and saying, and are designed to see how the participants understand their world.

In respect of the rationale for collecting data through observation, this study follows two lines of thought. Firstly, as Silverman (2006) argues, one advantage of observational research lies in its ability to shift focus when new interesting data become available. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) explain this advantage further by indicating that ethnographic research has a characteristic funnel structure, which is progressively focused over its course. This progressively focusing structure allows the research problem to be developed or transformed over time, and the research scope to be clarified and delimited over the course of the research. Thus, the observation method may generate opportunities for the researcher to discover initially foreshadowed problems. The second purpose of combining observational data is to enhance or complement interview data. In this respect, observational data can help the researcher to understand in more detail the complexities of many situations directly by seeing events, actions, norms, values, etc. from the perspective of the people being studied (Silverman, 2006).

Given the constraints of a doctoral research project in terms of

fieldwork access, limited timeframe and resources, it was not possible for the researcher to conduct a proper systematic ethnographic study as described by the above authors. Nevertheless, the researcher aimed to take whatever opportunities were available for undertaking a degree of small-scale ethnographic observation in both research sites.

In terms of recording observations, Silverman (2006) indicates that Emerson *et al.* (1995) suggest five sets of questions which researchers should attempt to answer when making field notes. These questions, which are followed in the present study, are listed in Table 3.2 below.

Table 3.2 five sets of questions concerned with field note-taking

1. What are people doing? What are they trying to accomplish?
2. How exactly do they do this?
3. How do people characterise and understand what is going on?
4. What assumptions do they make?
5. Analytic questions: what do I see going on here? What did I learn from these notes? Why did I include them?

3.4.3 DOCUMENTATION

In addition to using the interviewing methods and observations for data collection, this study also collected data from documentation. I aimed to gather relevant naturally occurring data on both background information of the industry and the case companies. I collected background

information of the theatre industries through a search of the relevant literature on creative/cultural industries, archives and documentation produced outside the case companies and available in the public domain. My purpose in collecting such information was familiarisation and the gaining of generic understanding of the context before conducting the actual fieldwork (Duffy, 2001).

Background information on the case companies was collected by gathering various kinds of written documents produced internally by the case companies (e.g. company strategic plan, annual report, meeting minutes, etc.), depending on emerging research needs and availability of the desired information. As Silverman explains, textual data consists of words and /or images that have become recorded without the intervention of a researcher. In terms of the purpose of taking account of textual data, this study follows Silverman's (2006) suggestion that researchers should not criticise or access the data in terms of objective standard. Instead, they should treat them as reorientations, the effects of which should be analysed. This enables the researcher not only to use these internal texts produced by the case companies as background material, but also to approach the documents for 'what they are and what they are used to accomplish' (Coffey and Atkinson 2004: 58).

3.5 METHODS OF DATA ANALYSIS

3.5.1 PRINCIPLES TO KICK-START DATA ANALYSIS

It is argued that analysis is a pervasive activity throughout the life of a research project (Barrows and Tamblyn 1980; Reynolds 2000). As Silverman and Marvasti (2008) remind us, in most qualitative research, unless you are analysing data more or less from the outset of the study, you will always have to play catch-up. They suggest five practical principles to help kick-start data analysis: a) analyse naturally occurring data already in the public sphere; b) analyse your own data as you gather it; c) ask key questions about your data; d) beg or borrow other people's data; and e) seek advice from your supervisor. This study employs the first three principles: analyse naturally occurring data in the public sphere; analyse your own data as you gather it; and ask key questions about your data. At an early stage of research, the analysis of the naturally occurring data in the public sphere tends to follow the inquiring manner of searching for general background information about the research rather than adopting a more critical analytic approach to investigate textual data. The latter approach is considered more relevant at a later stage of research when data collection becomes more focused.

With regard to 'analyse your own data as you gather it', as Silverman and Marvasti (2000) suggest, researchers are able to start reviewing the early data in the light of their research questions by considering the following issues: is the researcher comfortable with their preferred methods of data analysis? Are their data-analysis methods suggesting

interesting questions? Does the researcher grasp the data sufficiently to be able to sense whether interesting generalisations can be expected? Do previous research findings seem to apply to the data? Why and why not? How do particular concepts from the researcher's preferred model of research apply to the data? Which concepts work best and hence look likely to be most productive?

With respect to 'asking key questions about your data', Silverman and Marvasti (2008: 194) also advise researchers to ask key questions about their data, an approach adopted in this study. These questions include: Which categories are actually used by the people you are studying? What are the contexts and consequences of your subjects' use of categories? These questions are considered important because qualitative researchers 'do not want to begin with [their] own categories at the outset' and seek to identify 'the local phenomena involved', as Silverman and Marvasti (2008:194) remind us.

The following two sections elaborate on the specific methods of analysing interviews and textual data.

3.5.2 THEMATIC ANALYSIS

The main method used for analysing interview data, fieldwork diaries recording observational data, as well as documentation data in this study is 'thematic analysis' (Braun and Clarke 2006). As Braun and Clarke point out, thematic analysis is poorly demarcated and rarely

acknowledged, yet a widely used qualitative analytic method. In Braun and Clarke's view, thematic analysis should be seen as a fundamental method for qualitative analysis because it provides core skills that are useful for the conducting of qualitative analysis. Similarly, Holloway and Todres (2003: 347) identify 'thematicising meanings' as one of a few shared generic skills across qualitative analysis. Although analysing data through thematic coding has been considered as a process performed within major analytic traditions (e.g. Grounded Theory), Boyatzis (1998) asserts that thematic analysis is not a specific method, but a tool useful across different methods.

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), a key advantage of thematic analysis lies in its flexibility. They explain this advantage in three ways. Firstly, thematic analysis is essentially independent of theory and epistemology and therefore, does not require the detailed theoretical and technological knowledge of approaches such as those required in Grounded Theory and Discourse Analysis. In terms of this practicality of the method, thematic analysis seems to be an appropriate choice for analysing data in a doctoral research project. This is because, as Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest, it offers a more accessible form of analysis, particularly for those early in their qualitative research career. Secondly, thematic analysis is not wedded to any pre-existing theoretical framework and therefore, can be used within different theoretical frameworks. This implies that thematic analysis is a method that works

both to reflect reality and to unpick or unravel the surface of reality. This theoretical flexibility is arguably well suited for the exploratory nature of the present study and the interpretative epistemological position adopted in the study.

In response to the absence of clear and concise guidelines around thematic analysis, Braun and Clarke (2006) provide a definition of thematic analysis and suggest a six-phase guide to undertaking such analysis. According to above same authors thematic analysis is ‘a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data’ (ibid, p.79). In their view, a theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set. At the same time, they define a few terms that are relevant in thematic analysis. ‘Data corpus’ refers to all data collected for a particular research project, while ‘data set’ refers to all the data from the corpus being used in particular analysis (p.79). ‘Data item’ refers to each individual piece of data collected, which together make up the data set or corpus (p. 79). ‘Data extract’ refers to an individual coded chunk of data, which has been identified within and extracted from a data item (p.79).

The phases of thematic analysis as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) are listed in Table 3.3 below.

Table 3.3 Phases of thematic analysis

Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarising yourself with your data	Transcribing data, reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (level 1) and the entire data set (level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating the analysis back to the research questions and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

Source : Braun & Clarke, 2006:87

3.5.3 FIELD NOTE ANALYSIS

As Silverman and Marvasti remind us, 'in making field notes, one is not simply recording data, but also analysing it' (2008:199). In this respect, the five sets of questions suggested by Emerson *et al.* (1995), as listed in Table 3.2, also can be treated as relevant ways of analysing field notes. Moreover, Silverman and Marvasti (2008) suggest expanding field notes beyond immediate observations as a way of encouraging analytical

thinking about the notes. They illustrate this by highlighting Miles and Huberman's suggestion of writing 'contact summary sheets' or extended memos after each observation (Orr 1990b). Listed in Table 3.4 is a set of example questions to be included in contact summary sheets, as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1984). Following such lines of thought, the present researcher wrote fieldwork diaries based on immediate field notes as a way of developing field note analysis.

Table 3.4 Questions for contact summary sheets

What people, events, or situations were involved?
What were the main themes or issues for the contact?
Which research questions did the contact bear most centrally on?
What new hypotheses, speculations, or guesses about the field situations were suggested by the contact?
Where should the fieldworker place most energy during the next contact, and what sorts of information should be sought?

Source: Miles & Huberman, 1984:50

3.5.4 THREE CONCURRENT FLOWS OF ACTIVITY FOR DATA ANALYSIS

According to Miles and Huberman (1984), analysis consists of three concurrent activity flows: data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing. Data reduction 'refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming "raw" data' (p.21). Silverman and Marvasti (2008) indicate further that data

reduction involves ‘making decisions about which data chunks will provide you with initial focus’ (p.220). Data display is ‘an organised assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing and action taking’ (Miles & Huberman, 1984:21). It involves assembling your data into displays such as matrices, graphs, networks, and charts, which clarify the main direction (the missing links) of your analysis (Silverman & Marvasti, 2008). Finally, conclusion drawing means ‘beginning to decide what things mean, noting regularities, patterns, explanations, possible configurations, causal flows and propositions’ (Miles & Huberman, 1984:22).

This study aims to adopt these three concurrent activity flows to analyse data across different sources of evidence.

3.6 CASE STUDY CONDUCTING

3.6.1 GAINING AND MAINTAINING ACCESS TO THE FIELD

My negotiating of access to the field was a relentless and time-consuming process although it started as early as possible in the summer vacation of 2006. Access was made especially difficult as the researcher had no particular connection with the world of ‘theatre organisations’. Despite the opportunity to establish initial contact with the ‘gatekeeper’ of the Magic Theatre during a doctoral conference as mentioned earlier, access to the Magic Theatre was not gained. This was because the gatekeeper unexpectedly withdrew his early

interest in the project along with his promise to provide fieldwork arrangements thereafter.

Considerable effort to obtain bottom-up access to other theatre companies by making general email enquiries was also fruitless. It was through creative use of other sources available in a different institution of the University of Warwick, the Centre for Cultural Policy Studies, that I had an opportunity to establish the initial contact with the Dream Theatre in September 2006. The gatekeeper of Dream, the Director of the Education Department, showed interest in my research project and considered that my project ‘may well tie in with our current thinking about becoming a learning organisation’.¹ After reporting my field request to her line manager, the Executive Director, and obtaining authenticated approval for the request, the gatekeeper sent me a ‘scanned’ email reply via her department assistant, confirming that I had been granted access to undertake field research ‘on the [Dream] (pseudonym) as a learning organisation’.²

Although the access had been somewhat ‘secured’ since the beginning of November 2006, it was not until mid-December 2006, that I was

¹ Source: An email response from the ‘gatekeeper’ of the Dream Theatre.

² Source: The confirmation email from the ‘gatekeeper’ of the Dream regarding the request for field access.

given the chance to conduct the first interview, with the rest of the interview appointments fitting into the first half of 2007.

Maintaining access to the field through the Dream Theatre was done in a considerably sensitive manner because the senior management of the company was extremely cautious about the research project's demands on the organisation's time and the commitment of the people involved. The gatekeeper of the Dream Theatre clearly indicated in her email response to me at the outset of the fieldwork that all interview appointment requests with organisation members or other company access requests must be overseen and coordinated either through her or through her assistant, the coordinator of the education department. The researcher was not expected to contact members of staff in the Dream directly. Given the fact that the access to the field was formally controlled by the gatekeeper, the scale of the field work in the case of Dream was largely dependent on the goodwill of the gatekeeper and the availability of participants. That, coupled with the fact that my initial informant (the gatekeeper) took maternity leave during the course of my data collection from the Dream, led to considerable effort in maintaining access to the field. This, however, was achieved by keeping in close contact with the replacement manager. All these factors contributed to the difficulties and uncertainties experienced with respect to obtaining and maintaining access to the Dream Theatre.

Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that all the participants

(including the gatekeeper of the company and senior management) involved in the research project made considerable effort and offered enormous support in terms of coordinating with the researcher during the data collection period. Unfortunately, however, access to the field was eventually cut short due to some organisational difficulties relating to the granting of further access to the organisation's employees for the researcher. The reason for this, as given by the gatekeeper, was that as part of the Dream's strategic goal of becoming a learning organisation, the senior management of the Dream decided to embark on a larger scale research project using a professional research agency. As a result, due to the scarcity of organisational time, the organisation would not be able to accommodate any further fieldwork requests for the present study, especially in terms of offering observation opportunities.

Searching for other potential case companies took place concurrently with data collection in the Dream Theatre. However, the only response received was from the Rainbow Theatre. Negotiating access with the Rainbow Theatre was relatively straightforward as it did not necessarily follow any formal procedures. Instead, it adopted an informal and bottom-up access approach. The initial contact with the company was established after an administrative officer, the Learning & Participating Coordinator in the Learning Department, responded to my email inquiry regarding the possibility of doing fieldwork research in the Rainbow Theatre. Once the initial access was offered in November 2007, the

researcher was allowed to make direct contact with the potential participants as needed. The first interview appointment was scheduled for December 2007. Most of the fieldwork access was arranged for the first three months of 2008.

Maintaining access to the field was done in a much more informal way and was dependent on the choice of the researcher or/and the participants. For example, the researcher had several opportunities to join casual gatherings of some production crew members both in the course of their work and at the end of their working day. There was no particular requirement from the company for the researcher to follow any formal request protocol. However, there were some obstacles and factors affecting the smoothness of gaining and maintaining access to the field through the Rainbow Theatre. One main obstacle was that the emerging scale of the research project raised concerns for some participants about their further commitment to the project. There were also obstacles related to the reluctance of certain managers to offer the researcher additional access to their department for observational research. As a result of these obstacles, access to the field was also cut short unexpectedly in the course of data collection.

In both case studies, although the researcher had gone to considerable lengths to maintain access to the field for as long as possible, the practical issues, mentioned above, undermined the access to some

extent.

3.6.2 PREPARING FOR DATA COLLECTION

In this study, the preparation for data collection involved selecting interviewees, requesting access for observation opportunities, drafting interview preamble letters and designing interview protocols.

In both case studies, the principles for recruiting interviewees and requesting access for observation opportunities were, to a large extent, based on snowball sampling under the guidance of the gatekeeper. This requires a researcher to select the study subject who appears to possess the necessary characteristics and through their recommendations, to find other study subjects with the same characteristics (Gobo 2004). Despite following the same principles in both cases, the experience of maintaining contact with each case company was quite different.

The senior position of the ‘gatekeeper’ in Dream allowed her to have an overview of the company under examination. She, therefore, was able to pinpoint relevant interview candidates from an ‘insider’s point of view’ in response to the researcher’s fieldwork requests. In addition, the researcher noticed that all the email responses from the ‘gatekeeper’ of the Dream (including the researcher’s original email requests) were marked with ‘SCANNED’ in each email title.

In the case of the Rainbow, the ‘gatekeeper’ was not someone in a senior position, but of lower rank; a learning & participating

coordinator. The ‘gatekeeper’ helped to set up initial contact between the potential candidates and the researcher by providing the candidates’ work email addresses or/and telephone numbers, mostly according to the researcher’s preferences. Once the initial contact was set up, the researcher was allowed to contact the selected candidates directly to make interview arrangements.

Prior to each interview, an interview preamble letter was prepared and emailed to each interviewee through the coordinator of the education department. The letter included general information about the researchers and the broad research objectives. The cover letter also indicated the researcher’s desire to record the interview process if given permission and the rationale for the need to record. The cover letter also explained how information would be used and kept confidential. Finally, the cover letter acknowledged the participants’ right to request/review interview transcripts or even to withdraw their accounts at any stage of the research.

3.6.3 COLLECTING EVIDENCE

All interviews were conducted face-to-face in the local workplace context of participants, with some being held in their offices, some back stage, and some at the in-house café. On each interview day, the researcher always requested the participant’s permission to record the interview before commencing it. As there was no refusal from any

participants, all the interviews were digitally recorded.

In the case of Dream, eighteen individual in-depth interviews were conducted with seventeen selected participants serving nine different areas of the company and crossing three layers of organisational hierarchy. Ten of the interviewees worked principally in the area of business-oriented practice whereas the other seven participants worked mainly in the area of production-oriented practice. The most senior person interviewed was the executive director. The interviews conducted in the case of Dream lasted between 60 and 90 minutes.

In the case of Rainbow, fourteen individual-in-depth interviews were conducted, with thirteen selected participants working in nine different areas of the company and crossing four layers of organisational hierarchy. Among them, eight of the participants worked mainly in the area of business-oriented practice. An additional seven impromptu interviews were conducted informally with several members of the production-making crew (including lighting technicians, sound technicians, and costume makers). These took place when the opportunities arose during ethnographic observations conducted on the research site.

With respect to the interviewing process, a semi-structured interview style was used in the first few interviews in the case of Dream. However, that initial interviewing experience revealed that following

the predesigned structure could limit the chances of capturing the richness of information and emerging perspectives from 'the insider's point of view'. For example, it was very difficult to elicit detailed and lively responses from the interviewees about their learning experiences if they were asked directly about the topic of 'learning' too early in the interview process. As Fontana and Frey (1995) note, unstructured interviewing attempts to understand the complex behaviour of members of society without imposing any a priori categorisation that may limit the field of inquiry.

One of the key issues in this study is to 'capture' learning involved in the organisation under examination from the 'insider's point of view'. Therefore, instead of asking pre-defined questions containing categorisations that may impose a priori theoretical perspectives or the researcher's preconceptions of the issue, the interviews were started by the interviewer by inviting the participants to provide some background information about their job roles. Typical questions asked at the beginning of each interview were: 'Would you like to tell me what your role is at Dream/Rainbow?'; 'What does your role involve?'; 'How long have you been working in this role?'; 'How long have you been working in this company?' The researcher would also encourage the participants to elaborate and illustrate their accounts when their answers were ambiguous or oversimplified.

Such warm-up questions allowed the researcher to obtain general

understanding of the practice involved in the local work context of the participants and the underlying connection of a particular practice to the overall operation of the organisation.

Once a degree of rapport with the participants and a level of understanding of their work background were established, the researcher carefully directed the participant's attention to the topic of learning. This she did by asking them whether 'learning' was a relevant aspect of the work context they had just described. Most of the interviewees responded to that question positively, stating that they had been learning constantly. The researcher then invited the participants to elaborate on questions of how this learning aspect related to their work and to illustrate their answers with examples. In this respect, the researcher was able to identify learning patterns involved in the case companies through the ways in which they were described by the participants as a related aspect of their work.

The researcher noted that an unstructured interview style enabled her to 'learn' from the 'natives' people who work for the case companies – their culture, their language, their ways of life (Spradley 1979) or even learn their 'local' vocabularies. It was noticed that some interviewees in the Dream seemed to have their own preferred 'local terms' to describe the experience they considered as 'learning'. For example, one interview in the case of Dream stated that he had been learning every day. However, instead of calling it 'learning', he classified it as

‘experience’.

During each interview, it was the researcher’s intention not to interrupt the respondent’s accounts unless it was necessary to redirect the focus of the interview. When a respondent touched on an issue of central interest for the study, the researcher usually attempted to improvise questions that could lead to new insights through the interview process. The researcher often asked the respondents to provide concrete examples in order to clarify and elaborate on the subject of discussion. Follow-up questions were occasionally used for the purpose of further clarification and explanation if considered necessary. Through each interview, the researcher also learned to refine the focus of fieldwork interest and methods of inquiry. In this respect, different versions of interview protocols were used by taking account of post-interview outcomes. For example, the interview protocol used for interviewing participants from the business side of the company was different from that used for interviewing people from the production side. This distinction was a result of sensing the considerably different working aspects of these two parts of the company.

Turning to the conducting of observations, the researcher took every possible opportunity, either formally or informally, to ‘see’ what could be seen on the research site. For example, the researcher was able to observe informally the spatial organisation of the activities during each field visit. This was especially possible in the case of Rainbow, where

the researcher was given more access to the ‘private’ work space of the theatre (e.g. backstage area) than to the participants’ offices, which were only accessible during interview sessions. For example, the researcher observed that the respective work spaces of production-oriented practice and business-oriented practice were somewhat separated from each other as they were accessed through different main entrances to the building.

In terms of formal observation opportunities offered by Dream, the researcher was permitted to attend two group meetings that were set up under the broad heading of ‘Dream as a learning organisation’.

Regarding the case of Rainbow, the researcher was allowed some flexible opportunities for exploring production-oriented practice and the overall process of production making. One of the earliest opportunities was presented on the day of the interview of Rainbow’s head of stage. Although this interview was initially scheduled to take place at the office of the head of stage, only the first few minutes were held there. The rest of the interview took place during the course of an informal ‘tour’ across different parts of the backstage area of the Rainbow theatre under the guidance of the head of stage. The reason for this was that the interviewee found it difficult to describe the nature of his job without showing the researcher the local context of his work. Therefore, he offered to give the researcher a backstage tour to explain the overall

process of production making and the ways of doing stage work.

On separate days, the head of stage also offered the researcher opportunities to see from backstage the process of fitting a stage for a show and then running a live show.

Another opportunity was provided by one of the costumer makers in the wardrobe department of the Rainbow, who allowed the researcher to shadow her for a day at work and to mingle with other members of the production making crew also working in the vicinity.

All these opportunities in the case of Rainbow to observe naturally occurring activities within the context in which they were embedded provided the researcher with maximum exposure to both the specific aspects of the local phenomenon of theatre making as well as the overall process in that particular theatre.

The researcher also had an opportunity to observe a ‘backstage tour’ organised by a project manager in the learning department of the Rainbow as part of the company’s educational service offered to members of the public interested in knowing more about theatre making. At this event, the researcher discovered by chance how one of the learning officers shadowed her experienced colleagues and how this kind of experience was related to the learning experience of the learning officer.

All the above observational events were digitally recorded as audio

materials. The researcher also took immediate field notes of the observation as well as extended memos in a fieldwork diary as soon as possible after the fieldwork, following the methods of ethnographic study, as explained previously in Section 3.4.2.

Data from documentation was collected through email correspondence with the gatekeepers of the company, Internet surfing, and through field visits. The documents collected for this research included various types of company files (such as archives, strategic plans, e-news), records of official proceedings (e.g. meeting agendas, or meeting minutes) and online-based information (e.g. company web pages).

3.6.4 KICK-START DATA ANALYSIS

In this study, three of the five principles suggested by Silverman and Marvasti (2008) were applied very early on as ways of kick-starting data analysis. These three principles were: a) analysing naturally occurring data already in the public sphere; b) analysing your own data as you gather it; and c) asking key questions about your data. These principles played important roles in shaping the initial focus of research inquiry as they intertwined spontaneously with the processes of identifying, defining, revising and developing the research topic and research objectives.

For example, at the beginning of my first year on the doctoral programme, I attended a doctoral conference on the subject of

Organisation Learning and Knowledge Management at the Business School of the University of Manchester. At the time, I was still exploring the different possibilities of defining a research focus for a broad research interest in the topic of OL, as well as wondering about the type of research site that might be appropriate for the concerned research subject. The inspiration that helped me to decide on those essential issues about my research was the result of a somewhat serendipitous occurrence at the conference. I was attracted to an informal talk given by one of the guest speakers at the event, who made casual reference to the underlying link between the topic of learning and theatre making on stage. That guest speaker was the artistic director of a theatre company based in Manchester. His accounts on that day prompted me to consider researching learning in the context of theatre organisations.

After returning from the conference, I started gathering and analysing information available publicly about the context of theatre companies (e.g. theatre company literature, online archives, web pages) in order to justify my choice of this particular type of organisation as a research site. At the same time, during the course of the ongoing review of literature, a more focused research inquiry began to emerge, which was concerned with examining where learning happens in the context of theatre organisations and how such learning could take place. This, in turn, provided more focused direction for early stage data collection and

initial analysis whilst it was being gathered.

I created a map for each transcript using the computer assisted software called Mind Manager. In each map, the highlighted information in the transcript was grouped under categories such as thematic patterns, background information, evaluation of research design, local expressions (e.g. local vocabularies linked to the term ‘learning’, metaphors, analogies etc. used by the participants). Under each category, I used hyperlinks for reallocating original information chunks in the relevant transcript. Mapping the raw data in this way allowed me to organise and tidy the early transcripts so that data could be analysed as it was being gathered. Mapping out the interview transcripts provided an overview of the information patterns and the ways in which these patterns were scattered, which offered initial insights into coding and theme development. By creating these maps, the researcher was able to ask some key questions about the data collected and to answer them promptly. As Silverman & Marvasti (2008) suggested, such questions could be ‘which categories are actually used by the people you are studying? ‘What are the contexts and consequences of your subjects’ use of categories?’ (p.194).

Asking such questions about the gathered data very early on in this study allowed the researcher not only to ‘[see] the world from the perspective of our [study] subjects’ (Orr 1990a:37), but also to revise the research design in the light of the locally produced narratives. This

earlier stage of data analysis allowed the researcher to justify her decision to switch from the use of a semi-structured interview style for data collection to an unstructured interview style. As Merriam (2002:14) argues, the advantage of undertaking simultaneous data collection and analysis lies in the opportunity to allow the researcher ‘to make adjustments along the way, even to the point of [allowing] the researcher to redirect data collection, and to “test” emerging concepts, themes, and categories against subsequent data’. At the same time, Silverman and Marvasti (2008:193) remind us, ‘in most qualitative research, sticking with your original research design can be a sign of inadequate data analysis rather than demonstrating a welcome consistency’.

3.6.5 ANALYSING DATA SYSTEMATICALLY

In order to analyse data systematically across different sources of evidence, this study follows the three concurrent activity flows: data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing, as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1984).

To prepare for data deduction, all digitally recorded interviews were transcribed manually into word documents. Once the transcription for each interview was done, an initial scan of thematic patterns followed. Original quotations and information chunks appearing, on first sight, to be the most interesting were highlighted with initial comments marked

in the margin of the relevant pages of each transcript. There then ensued a round of full scanning of each transcript, the focus of which was on the generating of initial codes.

The researcher used the computer software package Nvivo 7 to facilitate further in-depth analysis of data following the six phases of thematic analysis listed in Table 6.3, Section 3.5.2. All the original interview transcripts from each case were imported into a Nvivo project and stored as two separate 'data sets' for thematic analysis. For each case, the researcher first generated a list of 'free nodes' as initial codes using Nvivo. The initial codes were generated in a manner to capture the essential information contained in each transcript. These free nodes were then organised into free nodes as broader theme levels by 'sorting the different codes into potential themes, and collating all the relevant coded data extracts within the identified themes' (Braun and Clarke 2006:89) in the light of research questions. Themes were created around specific issues for each research question. Themes created for each case were compared and contrasted across the cases in order to check for similar theme pairs that could be merged into one overarching theme.

In terms of analysis of the data set collected through documentary sources, as indicated earlier, this study followed an ethnographic approach. This means that textual data were analysed for what they were and what they were used to accomplish (Coffey and Atkinson 2004) by raising questions about the texts from a list of concerns: how are texts

written? How are they read? Who writes them? Who reads them and for what purposes, on what occasions and with what outcomes? What is recorded? What is omitted? What is taken for granted? What does the writer seem to take for granted about the reader? What do readers need to know in order to make sense of them?

In this way, the textual data set was not simply analysed for what they were and what they did on their own. Instead, by asking the analytical questions listed above, the textual data were analysed in triangulation with interview data sets for the purpose of verifying theme development. This was achieved by identifying either enriching evidence or additional information. As Stake (1987b) indicates, for qualitative case work, triangulation has been generally considered ‘a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation’ (p.454).

Similarly, the observation data was also analysed through field note analysis in triangulation with the interview data set and the textual data set in order to help theme development. In this respect, themes have not been generated from one source of evidence, but through more thorough, inclusive and comprehensive analytical processes across different sources of evidence. Accordingly, theme development involved the concurrent activity flows of defining, revising and modifying existing themes or identifying new themes until they

adequately reflected the case information across different sources.

At the same time, as Stake (2005) reminds us, acknowledging that no observation or interpretations are perfectly repeatable, triangulation serves also to clarify meaning by identifying different ways in which the case is being seen (Orr 1996; Wenger 2004).

3.7 REPORTING THE CASES

Reporting the cases is arguably an important step to moving coding towards interpretation of cases. Some scholars claim that we should simply let the case ‘tell its own story’ (Weber 1978; Gherardi 2006). However, Stake (2005) argues that the researcher should draw out the stories a case tells, partly by explaining issues and by referring to other stories. Stake (2005) indicates further that the researcher plays an active role in deciding what is necessary for an understanding of the case. Following Stake’s argument, this study reports the case studies first by providing rich narratives of the case issues focusing on describing ‘what is going on’ in each case company. Such narratives are reported in Chapters 4 and 5. This is then followed by further analysis of the case issues in relation to the research questions and discussions of the case findings in relation to the existing literature, which are reported in Chapter 6.

3.8 QUALITY OF RESEARCH

Validity and reliability are the two commonly used quality rules for research evaluation. However, the way in which these rules are usually applied in qualitative research and in quantitative research differs. Generally speaking, in quantitative research, validity refers to the accuracy of the presentation of reality. However, Silverman and Marvasti (2008) remind us that qualitative researchers should not be overly defensive about the quantitative sense of validity criteria because quantitative researchers have no ‘golden key’ to validity. Moreover, an interpretative qualitative study does not seek to claim that there is an objective truth ‘out there’ in the social world that can be collected and represented accurately through a research process. Instead, an interpretative qualitative approach tends to see research processes more as what Deetz, (1992) calls the ‘lens’ one researcher uses for investigation than as a ‘mirror’ of nature (p.66-67).

As indicated previously in Section 3.2.1, this study adopts the position that knowledge is socially constructed and that we are in a world of multiple constructed realities. The nature of qualitative research is to provide detailed understanding and interpretations of such multiplicity and complexity. It values the subjective representation of various versions of ‘reality’ between different researchers rather than seeking quantification, generalisation or objectivity. Given this assumption of reality, there is no ultimate benchmark for judging the true value of any claim (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Following Radnor’s (2001) argument,

the present researcher believes that it is the responsibility of the researcher to interrogate, to engage in, and to construct the intellectual and creative process of making sense of the data and theorising from it on the basis of a number of justifiable methodological choices.

The issue of reliability concerned in quantitative research usually ‘deals with replicability - the question of whether or not some future researchers could repeat the research project and come up with the same results, interpretation and claims’ (Silverman, 2006: 282). However, some researchers consider such reliability criteria to be less useful to qualitative research evaluation because it contradicts the underlying assumption of qualitative inquiry. As Marshall and Rossman (1996) argue, the ‘positivist notion of reliability assumes an underlying universe where inquiry could, quite logically, be replicated... This assumption of an unchanging social world is in direct contrast to the qualitative/interpretative assumption that the social world is always changing and the concept of the replication is itself problematic’ (p. 283).

Adopting a different view that is not confined to the problematic criterion of validity and reliability, Seale (1999) identifies the quality issue of a qualitative research with what he calls methodological awareness. As Seale (1999) explains, methodological awareness involves a commitment to showing as much as possible to the audience of research studies... the procedures and evidence that have led to

particular conclusions, always open to the possibility that conclusions may need to be revised in the light of new evidence.

By documenting and justifying the rationale behind the research design as well as spelling out the procedures through which the research was conducted, the present chapter (Chapter 3) demonstrates a reliable methodological choice for the conducting of this research.

3.9 REFLECTIONS ON THE ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER AND RESEARCH AS INTERVENTION IN THE RESEARCH PROCESS

According to Cunliffe (2003), all research is constructed between researcher participants (including the researcher, research subjects, and texts) – researchers are constantly constructing meaning and social realities as we interact with others and talk about our experience. Based on this assumption, Cunliffe (2003) further claims that it is important to recognise our philosophical commitments and enact their internal logic, while opening them to critical questioning so that we expose their situated nature. Scholars like Hardy and Clegg (1997: s13) share a similar concern about the importance of being reflective in research. They suggest that we researchers need to take responsibility ‘for (our) own theorising, as well as whatever it is (we) theorise about’. The above suggestions have an important implication for my present research. It is important to consider the researcher’s intervention

in a research process, and the ways in which such intervention might constrain and promote inquiry. I address this issue by reflecting on the mutually constructed identities of the researcher and power relations between the researched and the researcher.

My respective research experiences with the two case companies were quite distinct. When I first approached the Dream case company and negotiated access for my field work with them, my role as a researcher was perceived by the gatekeeper of the Dream as one of ‘analyst’ or ‘theorist’ on the topic of learning organisation. Although the gatekeeper did not explicitly express this perception, I gleaned this through her expectation of benefits from my research as the consequence of her permitting field access to the company. For example, after I started data collection from the Dream, the gatekeeper asked me to undertake a learning audit for the senior management team based on the information I had collected. The aim of the audit was to identify areas of learning involved in the organisation and the issues associated with them. I was also expected to produce a preliminary report on the earlier findings of my data collection from the Dream. Fearful of losing my field access to the theatre, I had no other option but to accord with the gatekeeper’s perceptions of my role as researcher and to fulfill her requests borne out of those perceptions.

As a consequence of accepting these research identities ‘imposed’ upon me by the gatekeeper, there were moments when I struggled to focus my

own research inquiry. Her emphasis was on mechanisms for achieving a learning organisation vision, whereas my emphasis was on critically exploring situated learning imbedded in the organisation and the influence of management intervention on such learning possibilities.

Because of the tension in the different perceptions between the researched and myself as researcher, I felt it necessary to clarify the nature of my research and my researcher's role as I became increasingly engaged in the data collection process. This was especially necessary as I was not able to make the initial contact with the potential participants of the research. As a consequence, their first impressions of my research were drawn from the gatekeeper.

The presence of a researcher in the field may constrain the research inquiry if the people being studied fear being scrutinised by a managerial 'spy' or worry that a threatening research report could affect their current job or career development as a result of participating in a research. To allay such fears, I indicated to both of the organisation gatekeepers in our initial contact, as well as to each participant prior to the interviews, that the purpose of the research was for me to pursue a learning experience as a researcher through a doctoral research degree. I explained that the main objective of the research was to learn from the participants about their learning experiences and learning-related situations in their workplace. Most importantly, I indicated to them that the research was not being supported by their employers in order to

serve the managerial initiatives of their organisations. In addition, I clarified to the participants that there would be no 'right' or 'wrong' answers in the interviews. Moreover, they would always have the right to alter their previous accounts or even to withdraw their participation in the research at any time.

At the same time, I was also frank with the participants about being somewhat 'naïve' with respect to the theatre world. Metaphorically speaking, by the term 'naïve', I refer to my decision to adopt a role as a researcher in an unfamiliar setting. This is analogous to a 'traveller' and a 'learner' who comes to see the 'inside' of a foreign country under the guidance of the natives. In order to develop an understanding of the inside, the 'traveller' needs to respect and learn about the local narratives of the natives used in their life situations from their own perspectives. In other words, as a researcher I was a 'foreign traveller' in the world of theatre, trying to learn from the theatre 'natives' about their learning situations and the related issues in the organisation, without imposing a list of ready-made categories about their lives.

Although an interview occasion is mutually constructed (Cunliffe, 2003), in order to explore the research phenomena from a traveller's and a learner's perspective, it was important to minimise unnecessary intervention and interruptions to the participants in the field during the interview process and observational occasions. I considered such a decision as important because it could encourage the interviewees to

talk about their world from their own perspectives, in the most natural way possible in an interview setting without the imposition of pre-defined ideas from the researcher. In other words, my interview strategy was to be an ‘active listener’ rather than an ‘active talker’. One possible consequence of this decision was that the interviewees felt respected and valued by me and were willing to express in their own way their learning experiences on the job that really mattered to them.

By being open and explicit with the participants about the nature of my research and my role as a researcher, I attempted to minimise the likelihood of restricting my research inquiry to categorical pre-given concepts in the existing literature. In fact, by adopting the roles of a ‘traveller’ and ‘a learner’, the research encouraged enquiry into learning in the setting. Some interviewees from each case mentioned that they actually appreciated and enjoyed the interview occasion as an opportunity to talk about their learning experiences as well as to become more conscious about how much they had learned on the job. They went on to say that in their everyday work practice, there was little opportunity for such reflection.

In contrast, the research experience in the case of Rainbow was less problematic because there was not much expression, either explicit or implicit, of expectation from the company of benefit from my research. I felt that I was largely treated as a student researcher during the fieldwork rather than as someone with a professional identity. One

interpretation of this could be that the negotiation for fieldwork access and the actual data collection process was less micro-managed by the senior members of the organisation. Instead, it arose through a bottom-up approach. My researcher's role, articulated through the metaphor of 'a traveller' and 'a learner', could be upheld for the majority of the time in the field as I was not perceived by the participants as someone knowing more about their world.

The power relations around learning mobilised by my role were multifaceted. On the one hand, there was a rather tense relationship between the gatekeepers of the organisations and the researcher in terms of their different expectations of, and interests in, both the process and the outcome of the research. The gatekeepers had more power in terms of controlling my access to their organisation's employees, profiles and space, as well as the extent to which fieldwork access was negotiable. The intent to exercise such power could be explained by the gatekeepers' attempts to reveal the tensions between existing work demands and emerging demands embedded in their organisation (especially in the case of Dream). This they did by attempting to 'protect' their employees from excessive interruption in their normal everyday work. As mentioned earlier, as a researcher, I was not allowed to contact the potential research participants directly in the case of Dream. Instead, the organisation gatekeeper oversaw the overall process for negotiating access. With the Rainbow Theatre, tension mainly

occurred when I attempted to negotiate a 'shadowing opportunity' in the Marketing Department with the Marketing Manager. Initially, the Executive Director of Rainbow promised me that I would have an opportunity to do fieldwork observation in the Marketing Department. However, for some unstated reasons, this opportunity was held back by the Marketing Manager and was eventually withdrawn from me. Another kind of tension experienced with Rainbow related to the request to engage more participants for interview appointments. As the gatekeeper informed me informally via her email, the request raised concern among some potential participants about the level of commitment required from them for my research. When my field access to the company was eventually cut short, the gatekeeper cited such tension as the reason.

The above reflective account of the research process shows that there was an imbalanced power relation between the researcher and the researched organisations. A consequence of this was that I was not able to continue my research always according to the initial research (learning) needs. This result is a partial reflection of the constraining impact of management intervention. My own learning experience as a researcher was constrained by the organisation gatekeepers as they used their power to control and restrict fieldwork access.

On the other hand, there was a more complex interplay of power relations between the researchers and the subjects being studied. My

power as a researcher over the participants lay in my initiative to decide on the broader topic of research and research designs. I, as a researcher, could also use the power of directing, probing and eliciting participants' attention to those issues that seemed to be interesting and relevant to the research. Also as a researcher, I possessed more power over the participants in shaping the possible interpretations of the case stories and the way to draw upon them to theorise about the research problems. In this respect, research can be seen as an intervention on the subjects being researched. Although, this sense of power embedded in the research process was not made explicit to the participants at the site, interestingly, some participants perceived it independently. For example, on one interview occasion, an interviewee expressed her curiosity about how I would draw together all the information collected from the interviewees to produce a report that would depict a comprehensive picture of learning in their organisation.

At the same time, the studied subjects also had a kind of power over the researcher through their possession of 'local knowledge'. They were the experts in their own world of their meanings and experiences. The research participants deployed narratives to make their actions explainable and understandable to those who otherwise might not understand. Thus, there was a dynamic balance in the power interplay between the researcher and the subjects being researched. Alongside the main discussions in the thesis, the power interplay associated with the

research as intervention offers further evidence of the organisational
dynamics of learning.

CHAPTER 4: LEARNING IN THE DREAM THEATRE

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter offers a detailed description of the case findings of the Dream Theatre. In Section 4.1, a brief introduction to the organisation's background and the overall process of production making involved in the Dream Theatre is provided. This is followed by Section 4.2, which focuses on descriptions of the learning activities involved in the Dream Theatre. The descriptions are organised into two broad categories: learning situated in the local process of production-oriented practice; and learning situated in the local process of business-oriented practice. This categorisation draws on the fact that production making and business administration comprise two main working areas of this theatre production company. Describing learning activities on the basis of these two categories allows the present study to reveal learning without it being removed from the local context in which it is embedded. Section 4.3 reveals the management interests in learning and the learning initiatives undertaken for such interests. Finally, Section 4.4 provides a summary of the chapter.

4.1.1 ORGANISATIONAL BACKGROUND

The Dream Theatre is a producing theatre organisation that has been running for more than forty years in England. It employs over five hundred people, on

both full-time and part-time bases. The company is led by the Dream Board, consisting of approximately seventeen non-salaried staff, chosen for their skills in leading and steering the company. The Dream Theatre is a non-profit organisation funded by a combination of public subsidy from the Arts Council of England and self-generated income from the box office, sponsorship and donations, trading activities, investment and other income. The financial implication of a non-profit organisation means that the total income of the company may not necessarily cover the total expenditure in a year. For example, as shown in the company's Annual Report 2005-2006, there was a deficit of £100,000 with a total income of £32.5m and a total expenditure of £32.6m.

Like many other theatre organisations, the Dream combines arts and business into one organisation. As one of its producers stated, the company's mission is about '*marrying the artistic inspirations of the production ... via the director and the creative team with the logistical, structural, and financial resources of the company*'. The artistic leadership and the management of the Dream are led by the Artistic Director and Executive Director. The Artistic Director is responsible for the areas closely associated with artistic issues such as selecting productions, actors and creative teams as well as directing outputs of production making. The Executive Director is in charge of the operation of the

business. The artistic and executive directors are supported directly by a number of senior managers who make up Dream's Steering Committee. Members of the committee include Director of Finance, General Counsel, Director of Communication, Development Director, General Manager, Commercial Director, Project Director, Technical Director, Learning Director, Programme Development Director, and producers. Each senior manager line manages a number of work areas structured through functional departments including technical departments, a marketing department, finance department, education department, press & public affairs department, human resource department, IT department and development department.

Under the Executive Director's leadership, the Steering Group Committee has articulated eight values in order to guide the work of the company. These values are stated clearly in the company's strategic plan 2006-2012 as creativity, collaboration, ambition, inquisitiveness, engagement, inclusivity, responsibility, and mutual respect.

Like most producing theatre companies, the work in the Dream Theatre is focused on two main areas of practice: production-making activities and business administration of the theatre as an organisation. Because each working area follows its own rules and ways of operating, it seems that two different worlds co-exist in the Dream. To some extent, there is an identity division in the organisation between those working on the production side and those on the

business side. This identity division is consciously articulated by some employees, who use terms such ‘the artistic world’ versus ‘the office world’, or ‘the artistic side’ versus ‘the office side’ to indicate their differences. For example, as the following accounts show, an interviewee who considered himself from ‘the artistic world’ commented that people from the ‘office world’ do not often understand what theatre is about:

‘A lot of people in this organization, particularly in the office world, do not understand theatre. So when we introduced the Human Resource Department, that was brand new for us because this company resisted human resources most of the time. That wasn’t allowed ... Those girls (in the Human Resources Department) are still learning about how a theatre works...’

Similarly, another interviewee addressed the identity division in the organisation by emphasising the differences between stage-based work and office-based work. He stated:

‘It’s a very diverse organisation. I mean, I have nothing whatsoever in common with an accountant in the finance office. We are different sorts of people. We come from different sorts of backgrounds. You know, I am a theatre boy. My life is being on the stage, all that sort of thing. But people

in Finance have come out of an accounts office...

They are working around the theatre - the play, and we are putting on the play ... I see them as the central satellite to us because what we do is put on plays.'

Interestingly, the Executive Director also pointed out the co-existence of the 'different worlds' and the challenge it presented for the senior management team. As the Executive Director of Dream stated:

'...you can't balance. You can only respect and listen. As long as both sides listen to and respect each other, it works...That's why the Artistic Director has a dotted line that runs out through here on his body... you do it because if you don't, and (if) he just represents arts and I just represent management, you will never bring the two parts of organisation together.'

In addition to the identity division in terms of people's mindsets in the organisation, the identity division between 'the artistic world' and 'the office world' is seen physically in the use of organisational space. For example, in my observation, the 'two worlds' use separate entrances and reception points even though their main working areas are based in the same building. The Stage Door is the reception point for entering 'the artistic world' located at the back

of the main theatre building, whereas the reception point for ‘the office world’ is located in the front part of the main building. In addition, ‘each world’ has offices spread in different locations and areas, which some interviewees regard as the partial cause of the company’s fragmented status. A number of interviewees expressed this view in the following accounts:

‘At the moment, there are a lot of spreading offices like this. We are very split. So there are people in this building. There are people in the technical department. There is a rehearsal room on A street (pseudonym). There are people working across the road ...We are (also) split in space between London and here. We go on tours a lot. So you actually end up – you actually don’t see people that much.’

Similarly, another interview addressed the issue of being fragmented in the following way:

‘One of the challenges for us is that the current building, in the way we are working, is very compartmentalised. So we are all in individual offices in lots of different parts of the building and in lots of the buildings as well. We have a very small green canteen that not everybody uses. So there isn’t much time in this organisation when you can just get together with people from other parts of the organisation...contact

happens by accident on the stairs or outside ... where everyone smokes cigarettes...’

Apart from the identity division between the ‘artistic’ and ‘office’ worlds, the organisation is also considered to be departmentalised in so far as many employees tend to work exclusively within their individual departments. Working across departmental boundaries is, indeed, an issue currently faced by the organisation. One respondent described the problem in the following way:

‘This is a very departmentalised organisation and people work very much in that way. There is a finance department, a development department, and it goes back to something else I was saying before that we are not necessarily as good as we should be in working across the organisation. And sometimes there is a kind of resentment.’

Despite the fragmented status of the organisation, the Dream Theatre follows a tradition of being artistically led. This was pointed out clearly by one employee in the following account:

‘But this company has always been artistically led. The top dog is the Artistic Director, who has the final say. We’ve got a very good Chief Executive now. And these titles are all new.’

Under the artistic leadership, the Dream Theatre runs a repertoire of production projects annually. Each production project has to meet a strict deadline of completion, which is marked as the opening public show day. The operation of different production projects may not necessarily follow a linear sequence. In fact, it is not unusual to start planning for a new production project even before an old one ends. Each production involves a cast of actors and a creative team. Although the content and work relationships of a production are always different from another, there is an underlying common process that every production project fundamentally goes through, namely the process of making a theatre production. This process follows its own procedures and has a level of autonomy that seems to fall outside the structures and control mechanism in which the ‘office world’ is organised (Sahlin-Andersson 2002). This process is described in detail in Section 4.1.2.

With respect to communication within the organisation, the Executive Director indicated the hierarchical nature of the company, reminiscent of a military organisation where juniors are expected to follow directives without question. She described the model in the following way:

‘It’s a very hierarchical organisation with one person at the top of it. The closer you are to that individual, the closer you are to the power base. Information is power and

communication is what is right for you to know.’

Formal communication across the hierarchy and functional units relies heavily on work meetings. At the organisational level, the Artistic Director and Executive Director hold quarterly staff meetings with all members of the company. At departmental level, the heads of department set up regular meetings for their own departments. Steering committee meetings, consisting of senior managers (around ten people) meet weekly. The meeting at the next level down is for the monthly steering group meeting, consisting of the heads of department and junior managers. As one staff member pointed out, this meeting is intended as a vehicle for facilitating information flow across organisational hierarchies, and an opportunity for individuals and departments to have their voices heard. Other meetings include staff forums where representatives from different areas of the company meet on a monthly basis to share information.

In terms of the informal communication mechanisms, staff e-newsletters are circulated through the company’s internal e-mail system. The e-newsletter tends to cover the latest information about events in the company such as updates on projects development, social gatherings, new members of staff or those leaving and so on.

Due to financial constraints, the company offers limited in-house training opportunities, with existing opportunities tending to focus on production-

related areas of work. For example, there is an artistic development programme, which offers practical training for actors and an apprenticeship scheme for theatre practitioners in skills such as stage management. On the business side of the organisation, the company financially supports a select number of senior managers to attend training programmes outside the company. However, there is virtually no on-the-job training for those employees in non-managerial roles. Apart from financial constraints, time also appears to be problematic with regard to training or learning new initiatives. This is demonstrated in detail in later sections of the case report.

In the next section, I offer a brief description of the process of theatre production making in the Dream Theatre. Because production making shapes the nature of the theatre ‘business’, it is important to draw attention to the underlying process of theatre making involved in the Dream Theatre.

4.1.2 THE PROCESS OF MAKING THEATRE PRODUCTIONS

Any producing theatre company has as its core ‘business’ the making of theatre productions. As indicated earlier, despite the fact that production projects continually change over time, there is a common underlying process that every production-making project usually follows in any producing theatre company.

The Company Manager of the Dream Theatre stated:

‘We have a process that we all know roughly to put on the

play. No matter whether it's the Dream Theatre or the Rainbow Theatre, you've got to start at the beginning and there is a process that every play fundamentally goes through. You all do it... That's the way of working because that's true for all theatre.'

In the following paragraphs, I summarise the overall process of making theatre productions in the case of Dream. In the margin of the summary, I highlight the key procedures involved in that process.

Summary 1: The process of making theatre productions in the Dream Theatre

Selecting the cast

A production-making process starts with the planning stage, where the artistic director chooses a production and decides the cast of actors and the creative team with the designers (designers are usually selected by the Artistic Director before the cast of the production is chosen) and with the assistance of the casting department. The director and designers work together to decide on the styles and period in which the production is set.

The designer then produces a model box, which is a three-

dimensional miniature version of the set with all scenery and props. It is used as a tool to help create the vision of the director and designer for the production and also to serve as the main point of reference for set and prop building. The designer presents the model box to the production managers and various workshops (such as props and the set) for them to evaluate the practicality of the design from their perspectives and to highlight potential problems.

After testing the initial design through the model box, designers need to pass on the detailed design elements for the production to the relevant departments (such as Set, Costume and Wig, etc.) so that the designs can be transformed into production elements such as costumes, sets, props and so on. Very often, designers and practitioners engage in discussions to give constructive feedback to each other. As the associate designer indicated, sometimes people *'are quite straight forward'* in their feedback, making comments such as, *'That's a terrible choice. That fabric won't actually work'* for instance.

Translate the design

The construction manager and drawing office make drawings of the set detailed into every item of the scenery, using computer-aided design (CAD). Then the drawings are handed to the scenery workshop, paint shop and props team. Some elements of the set can also be built in the rehearsal room to allow actors get a feel for the set. Meanwhile, in the costume department, the costume supervisor and designer decide on the best way to create costumes for that production.

Rehearsals

Whilst the set, props and costumes are being made (such as building a moving balcony, a golden floor or a working swing), actors are busy doing rehearsals, working together with the director, artistic coaches (such as voice coach) and designers, as well as other types of directors (such as musical or fight directors). These groups of people are often referred to as 'the creative team'. Rehearsals often last for several weeks and are constantly monitored. The Artistic Director is normally responsible for leading with the vision, whilst designers and producers acquire a feel for the vision by developing designs and programmes for productions in collaboration with the director.

Whether there can be a collaborative working relationship in

the rehearsal room is largely determined by the way in which the artistic director prefers to work. As an associate designer at the Dream pointed out, ‘Theatre, I think, is incredibly personality driven. Many directors work in very different ways, some of whom are more collaborative than others. I had an experience at the Dream working with some directors who were so dictatorial, that they basically told you what they wanted, leaving no room for a creative dialogue...’. He pointed out that the best working relationship he had was working with the present Artistic Director of the Dream, who tends to work more collaboratively with the rest of the creative team. As he explained further, a more collaborative relationship between directors and the designers makes it easier for different individuals to contribute to the outcome.

Recording progress and changes

Any decision made in the rehearsal room has a direct effect on the production process. The Deputy Stage Manager (DSM) in the stage management team (consisting of the Stage Manager, the Deputy Stage Manager and the Assistant Stage Manager as well as the Stage Operation Crew) records every change and development of the artistic and technical inquiries addressed in the rehearsals. The document in which rehearsal

notes are kept is called the prompt book. The prompt book marks on all the technical requirements for the production such as indication of entrances, exits, scene changes, and actors' positions. The book is passed on to the affected groups (such as the workshops, the technicians and the wardrobe department) as an initial guidance to organise their elements of input. For example, if a decision is made in the rehearsal room on changes in actors' entrances on stage, such decision may have an effect on how stage operation crews coordinate the scenic arrangement.

Preparing stage

The stage management team is responsible for preparing the stage in the auditorium for technical and dress rehearsals several days or weeks prior to the opening of the show, depending on the complexity of the show and its technical requirements. The stage operating crew is responsible for taking the set from the workshop and dealing with scenery joints in order to set the scene on stage for a particular show. They are also responsible for moving scenery during the production, and have to resolve any problems with the set as they arise while a play is being performed.

While the stage operating crew focuses on scenic set-up,

various theatre technicians (such as lighting and sound technicians) also work around in the auditorium testing from a technical perspective the elements in the production-making process for which they are responsible (such as testing the light effects)

Technical rehearsals

A technical rehearsal is the first time that the various production groups (including the creative team, the technical team, and stage management team, etc.) collaborate to run a mock performance of the production. They go through the show step-by-step, checking all aspects of production in detail as required by the director and designers. This may include activities such as light focusing, sound testing, and set reconstruction and/or other final preparations for the opening of the show.

Running a show

During running of the public performances as well as during technical and dress rehearsals, the DSM plays a key role in mediating the various inputs from different practitioners. The DSM uses the prompt book and a central controlling device, called the prompt desk, to monitor the running of the show. The prompt desk is marked with red and green lights, and monitors all the cues of actions as detailed in the prompt book

(such as lighting, sound, flying pieces and traps) and any other technical aspects needed for the show (such as infrared-aided complicated scene changes). The stage operating crew collaborates with the DSM in the darkened backstage area, responding to relevant cue signals in order to coordinate with actors' performances on stage.

Backup system

Most of Dream's productions are rehearsed twice, once with a principal cast and then again with an understudy company. The principal cast is the artistic director's first choice for actors, while the understudy company is the cast selected from within the company. In the case of illness or accident to any member of the principal cast, the understudy will perform in the show, making use of the information in the prompt book to ensure that the actor change causes as little disruption as possible to the rest of the cast.

Starting a new show

Planning for the next production usually starts when the first production is still in rehearsals. For each different theatre production, the associated production teams are different. In general, a group of the actors, a creative team and the various

stage management teams (such as stage operating crew and technicians) work together as one production team until the final performance of a show. At this point, the production team disperses. A new cast will be formed for another production as the planning procedure starts for a fresh process of production making.

Summary 1 illustrates the underlying process of production making involved at the Dream Theatre. There are three points worthy of note, as indicated in Summary 1. Firstly, the process of production making has a routine aspect. This routine is comprised of a number of procedures, including selecting the cast, producing designs (e.g. making a model box and scenery drawings), translating designs (e.g. making sets and costumes), preparing the stage, conducting various rehearsals, and running the show. These procedures do not necessarily follow each other in a linear sequence, but are somewhat interlinked. For example, as indicated in Summary 1, decisions made in the rehearsal room may have direct impact on the inputting elements of other production-making procedures such as stage operation.

Secondly, there is a ‘general element of collaboration’ in the routine aspect of the process of production making, without which creating a theatre production

would be impossible. As indicated in Summary 1, such collaboration is evident in the joint input from different groups of professionals (directors, designer, musicians, and technicians, etc.) as well as stage management practitioners (stage operating crew, costume makers, etc). Although the level of collaboration may vary with different production projects, the element of collaboration is almost inevitable in the process of production making because these people share the same ultimate goal, namely to put on a show on stage. One respondent from the technical department made the following comment about the collaborative nature of their work:

‘...to some extent the artistic community is a different area. We kind of all work together... whether it’s artistic in the rehearsal rooms or producers, and all of those groups of people we interface with, we’ve got good mechanisms for working with them. It’s not formal. It’s just the situations throw out the need for us to have a meeting, get together and share our thoughts on a particular issue and come up with some sort of resolution.’

Similarly, an associate designer at the Dream also stressed that the production-supporting teams and creative teams generally collaborate very well:

‘There is a lot of collaboration there... There are two types of dialogue ... You listen and very often you do make changes

in response to what you've heard.'

This interviewee explained that people need to pursue a collaborative working relationship with each other because it can affect the way in which team members play their roles, which, in turn, affects their on-the-job learning experiences. For example, in a collaborative atmosphere, as a designer, he would '*...try to help to creative enthusiasm ... and to get the best out of the way*' in which the practitioners translate his designs. However, if certain workshops failed to respect the work of the designer, '*they are not necessarily pulling out all the stops that I'd hope ...You can actually get more out of people.*'

Apart from the routine aspects indicated above, the process of production making also has some non-routine aspects associated with the creativity-oriented and project-based nature of the theatre business. As indicated earlier in Section 4.1.1, the running of the Dream Theatre is largely organised around the on-going undertaking of different production projects.

Against this background, one of the non-routine aspects of the business is that the members of a production team, especially of a cast of actors and a creative team, are continuously changed and renewed in different production projects, or sometimes in different performances (e.g. in the case of an accident, the understudy actor needs to take over from the principal actor in the same show).

This non-routine aspect of the process of production making is clearly illustrated in the following accounts by production people at the Dream:

‘Everything we do is different. Every time, you start a new project. It’s not even starting in a new year ... There is a new working relationship to be formed with directors, designers and actors. It’s different teams of people who are engaged in it ... different groups of people who form themselves into a different structure to do this show and then suddenly there is somebody else to adapt to, to do another show...’

Thirdly, there are also non-routine aspects in the process of production making, represented by the features of uncertainty, flexibility and novelty embedded in the process of production making. This means that there is always of an element of novelty or change to accommodate in such a process, there being no fixed and established ways of creating productions. As an associate designer pointed out, one of the unwritten principles of a producing theatre is that it does not replicate itself. This is a key difference between this type of theatre and a presenting theatre, which tends constantly to duplicate its productions. The respondent also pointed it out that the Dream Theatre has the tradition of keeping records of the methods and materials (e.g. promptbooks and video footage) used for its previous productions; however, these documents are only produced for ‘*that moment*’ and are meant to be forgotten. The respondent

stated:

‘We are not trying to revise something we did before... Although those kinds of notes are useful but most of us get the idea and throw it away to start a new because that is the way we like to think. The same applies to the notes you get in rehearsals; they are very much only for that. They are only for that moment.’

Next, problem-solving is treated as an inseparable part to the process of production making. For example, as indicated in Summary 1, activities such as model showing and various types of rehearsals are procedures instilled in the process of production making through which participants are empowered to identify existing and potential problems. They are also the means to resolve these problems quickly and collectively. In this respect, such procedures not only accommodate problem-solving activities, but also serve as opportunities to engage in such activities during the process of production making.

A final point to note from Summary 1 is the use of shared tools (e.g. the prompt book), which provide a common reference point to facilitate collaborative work across various input groups.

4.2 LEARNING ACTIVITIES INVOLVED IN THE DREAM

THEATRE

This section reports on the learning activities involved in the Dream Theatre in terms of two broad categories: learning situated in the local process of production-oriented practice; and learning situated in the local process of business-oriented practice. By using the term ‘production-oriented practice’, I refer to the range of regular working activities that focus on the process of production making as highlighted in Section 4.1.2. By using the term ‘business-oriented practice’, I refer to the range of regular working activities that focus on providing support and services to complement the process of production making and facilitate the smooth running of the theatre business.

4.2.1. LEARNING ACTIVITIES ASSOCIATED WITH PRODUCTION-ORIENTED PRACTICE

The learning activities identified in the local process of production-oriented practice are summarised as follows: learning to exist in different teams, learning the process of production making, learning from the experiences of others, learning to problem solve quickly, learning to let things go. In this section, I look at each learning activity respectively in order to expose the local context in which the learning activity is rooted.

4.2.1.1 LEARNING TO EXIST IN DIFFERENT TEAMS

One of the learning activities situated in the local process of production-

oriented practice is *learning to exist in different teams*. This learning activity is mainly relevant to those involved in technical support and stage management work (e.g. lighting or sound technicians, and stage operating crew) in the process of production making. This learning activity involves knowing how to shape and reshape oneself in different teams as well as how to read and react to different individuals' needs, personalities and ways of working. For example, a respondent from the technical department pointed out that because people in his department need constantly to engage in different production projects, they have learned how to shape themselves accordingly in order to work in different teams. This is explained in the following way:

‘Everything that we do is different. Every time, you start a new project. It’s not even starting of a new year...There are a lot of projects within the year...There is a new working relationship to be formed with directors, designers and actors. It’s different teams of people who are engaged in it ... different groups of people who form themselves into different structures to do this show and then suddenly there is somebody else to adapt to, to do another show...You learn about how to exist in different teams of people for one thing because you are forever working with different groups of people. Therefore, you learn how to do that.’

‘You don’t suddenly go into a group of people and think ‘Oh, my God! This group of people –they all know each other and I am just a new boy stepping into it.’

‘I mean everybody is forming the group into a different shape. At its most basic level, they regroup in different meetings. But there’s a lot more to it than that. They know how to react to each other. They know how to read the different individuals that are part of the team.’

Another example is seen in the experience of the general manager of the company. He stated that he has been ‘*learning all the time*’ in terms of how to work with different groups of production people through his various theatre-making experiences. He pointed it out how difficult it is not to learn in his work because every production experience is unique, forcing him to adjust to the changing needs and personalities involved in the process of making productions. The respondent noted:

‘I’ve always gone home thinking, “Wow, I’ve learned something there today”. I’ve just learnt through different challenges ...It’s difficult to actually quit learning in my world when everything is unique because it may be the same play but different ways of doing it and different personalities.

One is just adjusting to its needs, absorbing, and responding continuously to those different personalities.’

Indeed, learning to exist in different teams is considered a common way of working in the local process of production-oriented practice. As mentioned earlier in Section 4.1.1 and Section 4.1.2, the process of production making is featured with some non-routine working aspects such as the constantly renewed membership of production teams, the pursuit of novelty, and personality-driven work relationships. These non-routine aspects shape an on-going changing working environment for people who contribute directly to the process of production making. This changing work situation is particular associated with the relatively short ‘life span’ that each theatre production could remain in repertory given the on-going need to make different theatre productions in a theatre producing company. This constantly moving and non-static nature of theatre production making practices is highlighted by one of the interviewees as follows:

‘We don’t have that tangible product [like others company do such as those who make cars]. You can go and see that product, but it only last until the end of the May and it’s gone. Then there is another product and you might be not be part of that product. It’s slightly devious organic situations, which is

always moving and never static. It's always creating.'

For example, those involved in the technical support and stage management groups are continuously involved in different production projects and sometimes even need to work on more than one project simultaneously with different groups of people. Against this background, learning to exist in different teams becomes naturally embedded in their type of practice. As implied in the following account, the nature of such practice is relationship-based because the practice is largely structured around human interaction:

'Every show that you do, you've got a new mix, even if some of those actors have been with us before. Many of them have different composers, designers, maybe the same director. The stage management team is slightly different. You are just responding to the needs and those personalities. Then you just get on and do it. Most of the time, that's the way of working because that's true for all theatre when you come together on that Monday morning to start that play and that group of people has never been in the same room together before.'

Even when the same production is undertaken more than once, learning to exist in different teams is still necessary for the technical stage management staff because the actors and the creative team involved and the ways of making the

production can be very different from previous experiences.

4.2.1.2 LEARNING THE PROCESS OF PRODUCTION MAKING

Another learning activity identified is *learning the process of production making*. This learning activity involves not only gaining an overview of the general procedures required for the task of making theatre productions, but also knowing how to engage in a particular practice in that process. This means that people need to understand the collective journey through which they go. The importance of such learning is clearly highlighted in the following quotation from the company's online archive: *'With a large number of skilled people working in a small backstage space, everyone has to know what they need to do and where they need to be exactly at any given point in the show'*.

As stated previously in Section 4.1.2, although situations vary with different production projects, there is a common underlying process followed in every production. The process involves a number of routine procedures that shape the way in which productions are made for any producing theatre company. This point was made in the following way by one interviewee:

‘But we have a process that we all roughly follow to put on a play ... No matter if it's through the Dream Theatre or the Rainbow Theatre ... there is a process that every play fundamentally goes through. We all do it.’

Learning the process of production making is perceived as a necessary on-the-job skill; the nature of the work is to engage in the very process of production making in order to create performances on stage, irrespective of the uncertainties and variations in such a process. The technical director highlighted the importance of such learning in the following words:

‘There are things you can learn about the process really... If you got it wrong on one occasion, you can get it more right the next time ...Most importantly, I think they know the process. So the people may be different and all the uncertainties there are about the show ...But they know the journey they’ve collectively got to go through in order to turn out a show at the other end.’

The importance here lies in the interrelationship among the various procedures and practices involved in the process of production making. As indicated in Section 4.1.2, this process is composed of a set of interrelated input elements that are independent of each other as they all work towards a common goal, namely to contribute to the final goal of putting on a performance. This means that the progress made by one input element is easily affected by the other input elements. For this reason, it is important for those involved in production-oriented practice to learn the overall process of production making in order to be able to anticipate the work of others and, most importantly, to adjust

themselves in such a process.

For example, the progress of artistic input affects the way in which people in the technical department organise and plan their work in the production-making process. As the technical director highlighted, learning the process of production making for him means knowing '*when to be decisive and when to let the process run a bit*'. Let us take as an example stage preparation work such as production set building in the scenery workshop. This work is closely linked to artistic requirements and requests from the rehearsal rooms. It is vital that the learning director knows when to disregard the instructions from the rehearsal rooms and to allow people to '*just have the freedom to exercise their creative mind*', and when to respond to those instructions in order to build the set on time. As the respondent emphasised in the following account, over his years of working at the Dream, he has developed the ability to know when to trigger the real decision point and to push things on:

‘I’ve developed the ability over the years to sit back and allow that to happen and know that I will instinctively know when the right moment is to trigger the real decision and really push things on’

Learning the process of production making is also necessary for other members of the department. For example, the scenery workshop in the technical

department is responsible for building production sets (such as a moving balcony, a golden floor or a working swing) in response to the artistic needs and designs of the creative team. In order to understand the best way to make their contribution, it is necessary for those working in the workshop to predict how well the creative team has explored and shaped its artistic input elements, as well as to know how to react cautiously to the working rhythms of the creative team. It is in this way that the process of production making is learned. For example, if the workshop is working with an indecisive creative team, the workshop team will know not to react to every single request coming from the rehearsal room because they have learned from a process perspective that it is very likely that the final decisions will be made by the creative team at a later stage. This type of situation is described in the following way by one respondent:

‘If you’ve got a particular artistic team coming in to do a show that is very indecisive or some of them are very indecisive, you kind of know that the work for that show is going to become a bottleneck in the two weeks before it goes on stage. Therefore, you kind of know not to take anything else on for those two weeks because you are going to need all of the resources you’ve got. If you are not careful, you will spend four or five weeks doing nothing then everybody starts

working crazily for two weeks. You can anticipate some of that because historically, particular artistic teams have always delivered late. So you can learn in that sense, in the process sense, what to anticipate.’

The respondent pointed out further that if his team failed to learn such a process, they would *‘react to every instruction coming out of the rehearsal rooms’* and *‘build six sets of costumes and five sets... and it would be just silly...and a waste of effort’*. Learning the process allows people in the technical department to understand the reason why they need to *‘hang on a minute’* and allow the artistic team to *‘explore their creative minds’*, even if it causes *‘frustration’* in the pressured context of the production-making process. As the technical director indicated in the following account, it is common for members of his department to learn what to expect from a process point of view, and to rely on such learning to work more efficiently with creative teams:

‘...you learn how to do that... so when my team are frustrated waiting to start making scenery, for example, they kind of know why nobody is pressing the green button and saying, “Go for it now.” Because they know that people like me are saying, “No. Let’s just hang on a minute because they are not quite ready to start yet and they haven’t quite made up their minds, and it would be just a waste of effort to start now”. So

I think people understand the journey that they've got to collectively go on. I think they work mostly in an environment of mutual respect for everybody else's challenges that they've got to overcome...'

4.2.1.3 LEARNING TO SOLVE PROBLEMS QUICKLY AS THEY EMERGE

Learning to solve problems quickly is another learning activity involved in the Dream Theatre. This learning activity involves understanding how to remove existing or potential problems as quickly as possible whilst on the job during the process of production making.

As the company manager indicated, production-supporting teams are always challenged with a wide range of problems, including technical, design and budget problems, in the production-making process. These are not necessarily considered as problems by employees because they are accepted as one of the tasks in need of attention on the job. Due to the exploratory nature of production-making activities, which essentially is engagement in possibilities and uncertainties (see Section 4.1.2, e.g. model showing, stage fit-up, rehearsals, and process review meetings), problem solving becomes an integral part of the process of production making.

It is necessary for the supporting teams constantly to anticipate potential problems and not to hold back any problems in an attempt to minimise

disturbance to the production process and to remain on schedule for the common deadline – the opening of a show. It has been pointed out that people in the area of production-oriented practice tend to solve emerging problems through informal meetings and discussions rather than through formal channels (such as departmental meetings). Those involved in production are occasionally required to work outside normal ‘working hours’ in order to solve urgent problems. As the technical director indicated, production-making work has a problem-driven nature, and formal approaches are not necessarily the most convenient and efficient way to deal with emerging problems:

‘The nature of our work is that if there is a problem, it kind of blows up immediately, and it’s got to be resolved by the time we go home at night... whatever it is, those sorts of things suddenly come up quite quickly and need some quick resolution. They can’t necessarily wait until I have the next formal meeting with my team...’

In this respect, production-supporting teams learn to deal quickly with any problems as they occur in the process. One member of the production staff explained:

‘We deal with whatever those problems are and get on [with them] - it’s isn’t a problem because that’s our job... solve the

everyday needs or we know who to go to in other departments for them to fulfil their part – their contribution is their expertise.’

As a stage manager noted, stage operation work requires the crew to prepare itself like ‘*a coiled spring, waiting for any situation that might arise*’. He gave an example of such learning by describing his team’s reaction to an unexpected situation that arose during a show. A leading actor sustained a serious injury just moments before his next appearance on stage. At this point, the understudy cast needed to come into operation, having to respond very quickly to replace the absent actor in order to keep the show running as normal. It was the additional responsibility of the cast to ensure that the change of actors would cause as little disruption as possible to the rest of the cast. In this particular case, the understudy had to make a flying entrance onto the stage only two minutes after the accident. The need for a prompt, yet unmistakable response meant that it was not only important for the understudy to know how to work in a show in an unusual situation, but also for the stage operation team to know how to respond to the unexpected event. This provides a vivid example of learning to problem solve quickly. For this reason, the Dream Theatre normally rehearses twice before its first public showing; once with the principal cast and then once with the understudy cast. Through such rehearsal, supporting teams are able to prepare themselves for any on-the-job problem solving that might be

required.

As mentioned previously in Section 4.1.2, activities including technical rehearsals, dress rehearsals, and process evaluation meetings are practical opportunities embedded within the process of production making. Not only do such opportunities enable people to learn the overall process, but they allow people to become engaged in the process.

4.2.1.4 LEARNING TO LET THINGS GO

A fourth learning activity identified is *learning to let things go*. This learning activity involves experimenting with new or different ways of undertaking a job and not remaining entrenched in old ideas. This learning activity is related to the Dream's unwritten production-making principle - not to replicate and is reflected in the nature of production-oriented practice. As an associate designer highlighted:

‘In theatre nothing is really settled and fixed ... There is always a way of improving things. If the process does not work or ideas are not working, actually, you should let them go. It's one of the powerful things that theatre can do because of its nature.’

This respondent stressed that *‘to let things go’* was one of the most important lessons he has learned through working with Dream's current artistic director

and observing how he runs rehearsals. As the associated designer pointed out, he has learned that *'If an idea is not working, there is no point being shy about it. There is no point running away from it'*. Learning *'to let things go'* is a way of working in the Dream's rehearsal rooms. This point is indicated in the following accounts by interviewees:

'If the process does not work or ideas are not working, actually, you should let them go. It's one of the powerful things that theatre can do because of its nature. "Let's try something different". "Let's get rid of that idea". Then, the next day, we take it all down. That's the problem solved very easily by actually not holding on and letting it go.' – An associate designer

'The nature of the business is that people will always try something and throw it out, try something else and throw it out. It's just the way of it. It's a creative process. That's what it is.' – The Technical Director

4.2.2 LEARNING ASSOCIATED WITH BUSINESS-ORIENTED WORK

The learning activities situated in the local process of business-oriented practice are summarised as: learning to collaborate, learning about one's role, learning to deal with unusual roles on the job, learning about the company and how

things work in other parts of the company. In the rest of this section, each of these learning activities is described within the local context in which it is situated.

4.2.2.1 LEARNING TO COLLABORATE

Learning to collaborate is one of the learning activities evident in the working activities related to the running of the company through functional departments such as Finance, Education, and Marketing. This learning activity involves participation in collaborative activities through the identification of common interests and needs at and across department/team levels. One respondent described this learning activity in the following way:

‘Using experiences like that [adopting a new database for the box office system] ... will require people to pull out of their departments and work together across the board.’

Examples of this learning activity are evident in the undertaking of a pre-implementation experiment on a new box office ticket system database in the company. These examples are illustrated as follows in Vignette 1.

Vignette 1: A pre-implementation experiment of a new database for the Dream’s box office ticketing system

A database system called Tessitura was advertised to the company’s box office department in 2005. It was a computer

based contextual tool with the capacity to integrate multiple activities into one user interface system and to combine different pools of information. A manager in the development department was nominated to test the trial version of the software to ascertain its implications for the Dream. The development manager realised that more than one department could actually benefit from using the tool because it enabled different users to share information and knowledgebase across the company, which would facilitate potential collaborations.

Because making changes to the box office system has risk implications for a theatre company, before starting to test the trial version, interview surveys were conducted with key potential users in the affected departments to facilitate the preparation stage. A short list of interests was generated as the basis upon which to decide how best to implement the test.

Meanwhile, the manager also noticed that the scale of the project required input beyond her own capability and promptly sourced extra help from other parts of the company. She first involved in the project the development director,

who had a good overview of the whole department's needs and general set-up of personnel. She then appointed another member of her department to help specifically with the financial implications of the implementation. As the project progressed, they began to incur another difficulty. Due to fear of new technology, some staff members resisted the changes implied in the new system, which was causing considerable tension within the team. In order to progress the project, particular encouragement and assistance were offered to those who were considerably conservative in their use of the new database.

Implementation and benefits

Despite difficulties and tensions, the implementation process was successful. As a result of using the new database, there has been increasing interaction across departments, especially between the box office department, the development department, and the marketing department. With increased comfort with the software, these three departments began to roll it out to the Enterprise and the IT departments. They also intended to promote it to the executive office and their London-based offices, which had a separate database system at the time.

The use of the new tool prompted people to pool all information about the Dream's customers and seek potential collaborations. For example, prior to the use of the new database, the typical way of raising invoices at the Dream had been through the development officer, who would request the raising of invoices from the finance department, which the development department would then post to the membership organisations asking for their contributions. However, this approach was time-consuming and required considerable cross-checking between departments. By working collaboratively on testing the new database, the development and finance departments learned a more efficient and professional way to raise invoices, which has helped them to avoid wasting time on unnecessary cross-checking between departments. As the development officer stated, one advantage 'discovered through this learning practice is that it helps to increase efficiency and minimise the time wasted in checking over departments. It doesn't involve working over ... where previously we used to need to check with another department, asking them to do it and wondering if they'd done it and then not being sure whether it had been sent out...' The development manager described such learning experience in the following way:

'It has involved learning to work with others...the learning

and understanding of other people's needs...It's about learning how other departments do things and how their need for the system might be different from mine'.

Moreover, as more departments became involved in exploring the use of the software, increasing numbers of employees began to recognise the links between their own work and that of others' in certain respects. Staff members began to explore ways of enhancing the connections between common interests and needs, and learned to collaborate with each other in those areas, whereas previously, individual departments had tended to work in isolation. For example, both the development department and the marketing department needed to organise their own events for company donors. Previously, they had not shared information on such activities, one consequence of which was that their scheduling often clashed with each other, leading to the impossibility of engaging donors in both events. Through the use of the new database, the two departments realised the value of collaborating in areas such as scheduling and reaching out to their members. As the development manager stated, 'We have to learn more about that sort of activity'.

In addition, she commented on the way in which she was learning to work more collaboratively with other colleagues through the testing

and use of a shared database:

‘It’s been through this horrible database project because it’s an area I am not [specialised] in - I am not an IT specialist ... But it forces me to talk to different people, and different teams who also work on it. It forces me to know a little more about other departments and the use of it’.

Similarly, another interviewee gave a further account of how this project had been successful in terms of enhancing across-departmental working:

‘Many different people from different parts of the organisation have got involved...They never really worked together that well in the past’.

As shown in Vignette 1, since the adoption of the new tool, there has been increasing across-work communication between different departments of the Dream, especially among the box office department, and the development and marketing departments. The facilitation of the new tool has prompted people to learn to collaborate with others from different parts of the company. Such learning is not limited to the level of simply gaining a better mutual understanding of each other’s work in general, but involves getting to know the specific needs of individual teams and departments, and identifying ways of

working with each other on overlapping areas between their practices.

This learning activity is closely linked to the general status of the organisation perceived by a number of interviewees as *'being compartmentalised'*. As mentioned previously, it was commonly felt by most interviewees from the 'office world' that individual departments on the business side of the company tended to work in isolation and were not good at cross-team/department working. The use of the database has forced people to extend their practice domains and interests. This learning activity is evident in several dimensions, as indicated in Vignette 1. For example, in the preparation stage of the implementation, information about the potential use of the database was gathered through interview surveys in order to take account of the specific needs of the main end-users. Meanwhile, within the development department, team members with IT-friendly attitudes have helped those with technology fears to discover the advantages of the new database. At cross-team and departmental levels, the web development team, fund-raising team and the marketing team as well as the education and press departments all became involved in the implementing process and fed the system with different pools of information.

As pointed out by a number of interviewees, these groups have continued to work together since the installation, even though they had *'never really worked together that well in the past'*. By using a shared tool, employees have begun to

find common ground in their work, are able to recognise more common interests among them and have discovered ways to improve their services. For example, the marketing and membership departments have learned the need to be more aware of each other's schedules in terms of organising events for membership donors in order to avoid clashes of events.

4.2.2.2 LEARNING FROM OTHERS' EXPERIENCE

Learning from others' experience is another learning activity evident in the working area of business-oriented practice. This learning activity involves discovering the ways in which other people deal with a particular situation, problem or task on the job. It is seen as an informal form of learning, which plays an important role in the workplace of the Dream Theatre. In this respect, one interviewee pointed out:

‘Theatre relies on a significant rock, which is to do with experienced people passing on skills to less experienced people... Part of the journey is that the less experienced people are taught by the more experienced people not in a formal way, but just by working with people who have different short cuts, different routes, different methods, and different techniques. There is a swapping of experience and skills. There is a lot of that.’

This informal form of learning is partially related to the lack of formal learning opportunities on the job, such as job training. As some interviewees pointed out, many members of staff working on the business side of the company feel that the existing formal learning opportunities on the job are very limited. For example, one junior manager commented that the only available formal learning opportunity of which she was aware was the Introduction Day, offered to new arrivals to the company. This introductory event is normally organised by the HR department and focuses on briefing people with general and basic information about the company (e.g. safety issues). However, people do not necessarily consider this opportunity as particularly useful to their learning experience on the job because it tells them little about specific roles or practices. In addition, it was pointed out that such opportunity is not necessarily made available at the appropriate time, which provides another reason for people failing to benefit from the potential learning opportunity of such an event. As one interviewee stated:

‘When we have a new arrival in the department, there is an induction day that is organised by the HR department. I’ve often heard that the general feeling is that it happens too late. I was here a month before I had it. It’s a general guide for who’s where, as well as safety, things like that. That’s an initial reception point. I think it was too late.’

In this respect, some interviewees considered learning from others' experience as the most useful way of learning on the job. As one respondent from the education department pointed out, '*learning with and about others*' is the best way to learn on her job because it allows her to identify experiences/skills that she needs to address in her work. Similarly, the general manager of the company considered learning by observing others dealing with a similar situation as the most useful learning, as he explained in the following account:

'I am not the sort of person to respond to formal learning. Well, I find training generally to be the least helpful form of learning because I am better at - I acquire more information by observing people than I do from going into a classroom. But that's my personal learning style. So I tend to look for all sorts of opportunities because they are about interactions, about the ways people behave.'

This manager acknowledged that he had learned a great deal from watching the executive director, with whom he had frequent contact in meetings and other work occasions. He explained:

'I see [my boss] the Chief Executive manage the Dream board in a very skilled way. I've learned a great deal from watching her ... by observing. We have pretty frequent

contact. I have regular meetings with her and I also observe in other meetings.’

Similarly, another senior manager, the Finance Director, indicated that she has also learned a great deal from her line manager, the Executive Director. In her view, the Executive Director has been very good at ‘*giving examples from her experience*’ and ‘*helping with particular problems*’. She described this learning experience in the following way:

‘We meet very regularly because she (the Executive Director) is my line manager. She is very good at helping with particular problems. So if you go to her with an issue that you are not sure how to handle, she will give you examples from her experience which will help you to find a way through. I do feel in terms of learning – the most learning I’ve done within the organisation has been from her... The most I have learned, I hope, is how to be a really good manager and project director. That comes absolutely from two things – doing it and being coached by my boss.’

She further indicated that she was hoping to apply those learning experiences to her own management practice so that her junior members of staff could learn from her experience as well. Meanwhile, she stated that she had also learned from many of her junior manager’s experiences. She believed that learning from each other’s experiences plays an important role in the working

relationship with the marketing manager, who is junior to her by a few levels. Because they came to work for the Dream from very different backgrounds, they work consciously to draw out the best of each other's experience and to bridge the gaps in their knowledge and experience by learning from each other. As the Director of Finance described:

‘I talked to the marketing manager about how I saw the [ways of running] Finance Department. He was close to me in terms of supporting me in projects ... We really worked together well to discover the best way of doing this thing. He brought in very particular knowledge that I didn't have in terms of how to structure action models ...I felt that I've learnt something from him in terms of his financial expertise... When we first started working together, we came from very different disciplines with different ways of working and different views of the world. Over time, because I've learnt from him and he has learnt from me, we inhabit the same world as we work on this project... That has resulted from our explaining to each other what our different perspectives are; what our thought processes are; what our rationale and our decision making are in the greatest of detail ...it just gives us a shared understanding and from that, our skill sets come

together.’

The Director of Finance is not the only senior manager to learn from his juniors. The Executive Director also indicated that she learns quite often about how to manage the company and do things differently from feedback from her staff. As she indicated:

‘I learn about how to manage the organisation all the time from the feedback I get from the staff. So I started four meetings this morning and I learned quite a lot there. Um, I feel the whole time as though I’ve got to keep my ears and my heart and my mind open to the things that people are reflecting back to me either about myself or about the organisation, and then do something about that to create a change. Um, so I would say my day is spent learning quite a lot, in terms of specific, real deep thinking about how I might do something differently for the company or have the company do something differently.’

In addition, the Executive Director demonstrated that she often tries to learn from experiences of those working outside the company who play similar roles in different organisations. This she mentioned in the following account:

‘I seek advice from people I value who have demonstrated in

their career that they know how to do it.’

To illustrate her point, she claimed that she used to talk to a senior member of the BBC about how he had changed the management culture there:

‘He doesn’t prescribe something I should do. Just by telling me what he did, I then think “Oh, my God. I could do this and I could do that.’

She also stressed however, that she would not rely on learning from those who merely know the theory with no practical experience. This point was clearly demonstrated in her following account:

‘I wouldn’t have ever consulted somebody who is just a teacher. I might use a teacher like M (pseudonym) to run a training programme. However, if I have a problem I want to solve, I will be going to somebody who is actively doing something like what I am doing – [which] might be in a different context from that of running an arts organisation. I want to talk to someone who is living it rather than theorising about it. That’s quite a critical difference in terms of the sort of people I am seeking advice from.’

4.2.2.3 LEARNING ABOUT THE COMPANY AND HOW THINGS WORK IN A DIFFERENT PART OF THE COMPANY

Learning about the company and how things work in a different part of the company is another learning activity involved in the business-oriented practice. This learning activity focuses on obtaining an overview of the company in the sense of knowing ‘what is going on’, ‘what is involved in other people’s jobs’ and ‘how things generally are done in different parts of the organisation’, so that the learner can better understand his/her own role in relation to the broader context of the company. In particular, to know ‘what is going on’ includes knowing the impact on the present of critical events in the organisation’s past.

An example of such learning is evident in the experience of the head of the human resource department. When she first came to the department as a new manager, she intended to promote a number of changes within the company which she considered to be ‘beneficial’ to the organisation’s employees. However, some of her colleagues who had had more years of experience working in the company made her aware of the potentially negative consequence of making such changes. They explained to this manager that the changes she wanted to implement might remind people about a similar event in the past that had caused a considerable degree of disappointment among the employees. As this manager began to learn more about the company and the implications of its past on the present, she did not pursue those changes, so as to avoid causing unnecessary negative reverberations within the company. As she described:

‘I’ve only been here for two years and I might go about and make some changes that cause a huge amount of upset because in fact, it links back to something that happened five years ago. So I think I am always grateful for those people who can explain to me why something might happen in a particular situation because of a previous event in the company. That’s really helpful.’

Moreover, she indicated that learning about the company and the way in which it operated generally allows her to understand better the function of her department and her role in relation to the broader context of the organisation. She illustrated this point in the following account:

‘Human resources is a service that sits within the company. I need to make sure that the service my team provides reflects theatre. I don’t understand theatre fully. So I am dependent upon others to explain to me how theatre works and how it functions because I somehow need to mould human resources to make it fit with theatre.’

Her account above relates to the issue of ‘having an identity split’ between the production world and office world, as described in Section 4.1.1. It was pointed out earlier that many of the permanent members of staff do not necessarily have a

theatre-related background. As a result, few of them have a clear idea about the ways in which their own roles are related to the broader picture of the organisation. At the same time, people working in the ‘office world’ of the organisation have limited understanding of the ways in which things are organised and done in the ‘artistic world’ and vice versa.

As pointed out by a respondent from the ‘production world’, because people from different parts do not necessarily share mutual understanding of each other’s work, difficulties are sometimes created for both sides when these parts need to interact. He indicated that on occasion, production people need to make extra effort to explain to office staff what they are doing and why they are doing that in a particular way. In the respondent’s words:

‘It’s difficult for a lot of us. It creates more work for us because we have to talk to them and bring them up to speed about what is going on ... They can’t always understand.’

The same respondent also indicated the importance of those working on the service side learning the context of theatre. He claimed that he had seen many still attempting to learn about the service aspect even after years of working in the company. Another interviewee pointed out that the hunger for such learning lies in people’s desire to feel as close to their organisation as they are to their “*genies partners*” (the creative team). In the following account, this respondent

explained his point:

‘Because in theatre, there is another very crucial element and that is understanding theatre. A lot of people in this organisation, particularly in the office world, do not understand theatre. So when we introduce the human resource department, that’s brand new to us because this company has resisted human resources for a long time. It wasn’t allowed. Those girls (referring to the HR officers) are still learning about how a theatre company works.’

Lack of mutual understanding is not only an issue evident between the production world and the business world, but also seen within the business world. As indicated earlier, there is a general tendency among people working on business-oriented practice to work within their departmental boundary and a reluctance to work across boundaries. As the head of the education department indicated, for example, one of the obstacles she had when working on some projects with people from the marketing department was lack of mutual understanding of each other’s work and not always having a shared language. She stated the problem in the following way:

‘People in the marketing department use a different language. Their approach to the project is very different from the way

we approach it ... sometimes it's almost talking in different languages...'

She indicated further that, as a result of the problem regarding cross-departmental work, there has been an increasing desire among organisational employees '*to keep communicating*' and to develop '*mutual respect*' at cross-department/team levels. As a result of this need, people have become more interested '*learning about the company*' and '*understanding how these departments work*'. As the respondent stated, '*there is that kind of learning I need to do. That's what learning means to me.*'

In the following example, the experience of an associate designer at the Dream illustrates the concerned learning activity more clearly. As the respondent explained, working as an associate designer, it is important for him to interact with multiple perspectives of the organisation. On the one hand, he needs to interact with other creative members by creating designs for productions; on the other hand, he sometimes is responsible for giving advice on other design aspects of the company that are less production based. He pointed out that the more variety of organisational perspectives he access, the better he is able to understand the particular ways in which other people do their jobs. He has learned to be far more aware of the different aspects of the organisation as well as the interests and difficulties of the company from various perspectives. He stressed that the importance of learning the larger picture of the organisation

has allowed him to respect different roles in the organisation and their corresponding approaches to work. As he stated:

‘It’s very easy to be just blinkered and say “Why did they do it like this?” Or ask, “Why did the producers set that stupid programme?” But actually, I’ve been in the meeting with those producers, and with the marketing people who actually made a point by saying “If we are going to open at this point of this play, that will get us better box office return”. You know, the box office return does deeply affect the success of the company, which affects people’s jobs. It’s a much more complex pitch. I have learned that.’

At the same time, the respondent also pointed out another issue that seems to push the concerned learning: there is an unspoken aspect of the company’s system which determines how certain jobs are done. He described this issue in the following account:

‘It’s difficult because you feel that you have to put on completely different ways of working with different people. And there are certain unspoken systems within the Dream for getting certain work done... It’s actually quite personality driven. Probably one of the weaknesses is people.’

It is by learning about the company and how things work in other parts of the company that he began to be able to respect the non-creative type of work in the company in the same way that he respected the creative work. He stated:

‘I’ve learned that people play different roles... You give respect ...I’ve learned that from trying to treat other people in the organisation in a similar way I work with all the creative bit.’

4.2.2.4 LEARNING TO DEAL WITH UNUSUAL ROLES ON THE JOB

Another learning activity identified is *learning to deal with unusual roles on the job*. This learning activity focuses on dealing with a working role that is different from the ‘day job’ with which one is familiar. This learning activity is related to the latest strategic changes taking place in the organisation. As a number of interviewees mentioned, the company has been going through a significant period of redevelopment, which has stretched many people to work in areas that are normally beyond the remit of their ‘*day jobs*’. For example, the technical director reported being currently involved in a redevelopment project in which it is necessary for him to interact with a different group of professionals who work to different sets of rules from those with which he is familiar in the process of production making. The respondent described the situation in his own words:

‘We are currently going through a very significant period of redevelopment ... which means I’ve got to start engaging in a way that I’ve never had before with architects, planners, and people who are involved with building things rather than putting on shows. It’s a very deep learning curve.’

As the above interview account indicates, dealing with such an unusual role has triggered a sharp learning curve for the technical director because he needs to mix with a different group of professionals (architects and construction planners), who work to a different set of rules from those with which he is familiar in his ‘*day job*’. Moreover, he is faced with the challenge of working up to other people’s speed of work in order ‘*to make an intelligent contribution*’ to their work, the same respondent stated:

‘The most difficult thing about it is that I’ve got what I affectionately call my day job, which is Technical Director at the Dream. Therefore, I put on plays and I run the workshops ... In the last year or so there has been an additional role onto that job, which is to engage with all the redevelopment people that I have just been talking about...They are completely up to speed and they are enormously clever... in order to make a good contribution to their work, you’ve got to get yourself up

to speed very quickly...’

In this respect, the unusual role has exposed people to situations and professional domains in which they have little understanding. Such situations are considered as uncomfortable because people do not necessarily know what to do or how to make their input. This difficulty is clearly stated in the following account:

‘I am still learning in the context of the redevelopment ...It’s a very sharp learning curve. If I am honest about it, I think it’s very difficult. I found it difficult because I have to deal with different sorts of people. Theatre people I am very comfortable with and I know exactly what I am doing. With architects and planners, different people involved in the construction industry, they work to a different set of rules and they’ve got different ways of going on. So yes, it’s a sharp learning curve. I am right in the middle of it at the moment.’

‘When you come to a meeting – you might sit in a meeting with ten people (the redevelopment people)... who know exactly what they are talking about and they are completely up to speed and I’ve suddenly got to make an intelligent contribution to that meeting...’

4.2.2.5 LEARNING ABOUT ONE'S ROLE

The last learning activity to be described in this Section is *learning about one's role*. This learning activity focuses on discovering what is involved in one's job and the appropriate ways of undertaking the work.

An example of this learning is seen in the experience of an in-house lawyer at the Dream. She indicated that having come from a corporate organisational environment, working in the Dream has been a sharp learning curve for her, especially at the beginning of her job. As she explained, her role has recently been established in the company. Because no-one had been there formally to hand over the job to her, she has had to learn about the job as she works. She explained:

‘It was a sharp learning curve at first because there was no one in the role before. So there was no sort of handing over to say “This is what you need to do”. And there were lots of areas – because I’ve been a specialist for many years as a property lawyer -charity law, for example, I haven’t done before and I have no experience of theatre contracts. So yeah, everyday is kind of something that I’ve learned and developed personally.’

She pointed out that although she has been a qualified lawyer for more than

twelve years and has considerable experience in providing law services to corporate organisations, she finds it challenging to work in the new organisational context. This is because the situations and the law practice required in a theatre company seem to be very different from the ones with which she was previously familiar. This challenge has prompted her to remain open-minded and to learn about her job by picking up new knowledge and experience at work.

She stressed particularly that such learning is not merely about collecting new pieces of information; but more importantly, it is concerned with familiarising herself with the industry and the company, and discovering the most appropriate ways of operating in the concerned organisational context. She described such learning as:

‘Being open to new pieces of knowledge or new ways of working or new experiences that make you work in a different way or give you an alternative way of working. So it’s not just about learning, like saying “I’ve learned something about the charity ... or a piece of empirical knowledge”. It’s also about learning the industry, the way things have been done, the way people work together, and also finding new ways of working with people.’

Apart from the example from the above respondent, two producers of the Dream Theatre also revealed their experience of learning about their roles. The role of a producer is to mix with various parts of the theatre company in order to ensure that the artistic aspirations are combined with the logistical, structural, and financial resources of the company. One producer described the role in the following words:

‘That’s the job... You tread the very fine line between what the production wants and what the company has to offer it. Sometimes it means you challenge the aspiration of the production. Or if you don’t challenge the aspiration, you challenge the mechanisms of achieving the aspiration. Sometimes that means challenging the company...’

Both producers of the Dream pointed out that a significant feature of their work is the absence of routine. One described this in the following way: ‘*You never have another day like today again ever because it’s completely different*’. The other producer added to this comment by pointing out that they are ‘*learning continuously*’ about how to cope with on-going changing situations occurring on the job. As one of the producers stated vividly, she has had to work with ‘*three heads*’ in order to deal with the multifaceted nature of the job and the corresponding changing situations involved - ‘*one for the artistic*’, ‘*one for the*

business’ and *‘one for the planning’*. As the same producer explained further:

‘You learn all the time everyday ... Two years ago, I had no clue about what to do. But now it’s very much okay. You could do this. You could do that. Let’s get this. You know, it’s continual; every little thing you learn, every little phone call you make and every conversation you have with somebody in the meeting. You learn that something that goes in will be useful to us at a later time.’

Similarly, the other producer described his learning by drawing an analogy. He stated that such learning makes him feels like *‘a little bird that is picking up’* new things constantly. *‘You’re just taking stuff in all the time that you will at some point pull out’*.

So far, I have illustrated learning activities associated with production-oriented practice and business-oriented practice. In the next Section, I describe the findings relating to management’s interest in learning and its intervention in learning activities.

4.3 MANAGEMENT INTEREST IN LEARNING AND LEARNING INITIATIVES

The management interest in learning is mainly evident in the pursuit of the

strategic ambition to become a learning organisation. As the executive director explained, '*You cannot run a company like the Dream without having some big ambitions*'. In this Section, I offer a detailed description of this management interest in learning and the initiatives taken with regard to learning in this respect.

4.3.1 EARLY EXPLORATORY STAGE

The learning organisation ambition was embarked on in 2003 by the current artistic director, whose vision for the company was to become an organisation where everybody could continue to learn in their jobs individually and collectively. From that point until the conducting of the case study, this ambition was taken on board within the Dream's senior management team under the leadership of the executive director at the time. This management interest in learning was clearly stated in one of the company's internal documents produced in a management meeting to discuss the learning organisation ambition. The document identified the need to '[r]einforce our commitment to the Dream being a learning organisation' as one of the key challenges of the company. Moreover, in an official scanned email reply from the gatekeeper of the organisation in response to my request for fieldwork access, it was clearly stated that 'the current thinking of the organisation is to become a learning organisation'. The gatekeeper indicated the company's

willingness to be studied ‘as a learning organisation’.

However, by the time data had been collected from the company, it was found that no consensus had been achieved within the company; not even within the senior management team, on the aims and objectives of pursuing the learning organisation ambition. Such ambition was only broadly justified through sparing emphasis on the importance of ‘learning’ in a number of the company’s internal files, such as the Strategic Plan 2006-2012, meeting minutes and annual reports, etc. In this plan, one of the company’s objectives was stated as *‘to inspire all members of the Dream to learn and work at the same time’*. In a meeting-minutes document, it was stated that *‘the philosophy of what the Dream is about has to underpin all learning activities of the company’*.

As one of the senior managers indicated in her interview, although the heads of the company were very keen to commit to the learning organisation ambition, there was still lack of clarity and consistency regarding what such ambition would mean for the company. In this respect, the practical implications of the learning organisation ambition were also left unclarified and undefined. One interviewee pointed out his concern, stating, *‘Within the organisation, I don’t think there is a clear idea of what in practice a learning organisation is’*.

Despite the clarity issues, a number of actions were initiated from the top as groundwork for the learning organisation vision. In an early stage of

exploration, the artistic and executive directors called for a number of 'learning organisation meetings' to which selected members of staff (mainly senior and middle-level managers) were invited. These meetings were intended as opportunities for people to discuss and share their opinions of the learning organisation vision in the hope of seeking consensus.

However, more differences than commonalities in people's views and interests were identified through these meetings. The main conflict of concern lay in the question of whether there should be one formal protocol for the implication of a learning organisation ambition. There were optimistic views about how organization employees should experience the same level of learning through pursuing a learning organization goal. As one of the interviewees highlighted the conflict in the following account:

'It was a very romantic view that people who work in the entire organisation, including people who are working in the canteen, you know, manual workers should experience the same level of learning as people who are really interested in [play and production making]. That was the one view. The other view was that if people want to do it, then they should. But you shouldn't impose anything on people whose interest isn't there. And they should rather learn to do their job better than having to learning about [play and production making],

you know, that sort of thing... There was a conflict in the room, split between what the aims and ambitions of the vision were. Really, what is a learning company wasn't really clear.'

Despite the conflicting views and interests in learning, an action point made in one of those meetings was to deliver an in-house training programme on topic of learning and leadership to a selective group of organization employees from both the production and business sides of the company. Many of the selected attendants were in the upper-middle managerial positions. The initiative was suggested by a Learning Manager newly recruited to the company at the time, and was taken on board by the heads of the company. This Learning Manager was appointed for her role and asked to help with the learning organization ambition because some senior members of the organization have considered this manager as an 'expert' with considerable experience of developing learning in cooperate organizations in her previous job. Thus, this Learning Manager was given the responsibility for delivering the training programme.

The training content comprised a range of formal presentations from the Learning Manager. The presentations focused on introducing a particular model of learning adapted in the manager's previous corporate organization, as well as a particular style of leadership. However, the training programme was not well received and did not last to the end because neither its content nor format was closely connected to the actual situations and working needs of an arts

organisation. As one interview commented:

‘... It was a bit basic. It was the sort of thing that you represent at A level class, in our opinion. It has a kind of quote, inspiring quotation from Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela; sort of that level.’

As another interviewee explained, one of the cultural elements in an arts organisation is that people are often more inclined towards ‘*values of inquiring spirit and investigated attitude*’ rather than by structures and rules. The training programme did not seem to take this cultural element into account. ‘*There was a bit of a culture clash*’, explained the interviewee.

Meanwhile, the same interviewees pointed out that the learning manager’s own leadership style as shown in the training programme was also problematic because she did not seem to be aware of the need to adapt herself to ‘*a different culture and different ways of working*’ required in an arts organisation. As one respondent stated:

‘The learning manager came in with very fixed ideas about learning and about how we were failing. She used to show this sort of curve and said (things like): “You are there and you should be here... Should you do nothing?.. or “you are

the worst organisation” and so on.’

As the same respondent indicated further, it was a ‘*very depressing*’ way of coaching other people to learn from this learning manager because she was very imposing in her views about learning.

For the above reasons, the attendants became disengaged in the programme and eventually dropped out of the training. The person who initiated the programme left the company shortly after the aborting of the training programme. As some interviewees pointed, they had not been informed again about the learning organisation ambition after the failure of the training programme.

4.3.2 RECOMMITMENT STAGE

It was not until over a year later, that the senior management team started to reengage their commitment to this learning organisation ambition through consultation with an external specialist in organisation development.

The return of management interest in the learning organisation ambition was inspired by the current artistic director’s vision for an *ensemble* creative team, the aim of which was to develop the organisation as a whole into an ensemble organisation. The ensemble organisation vision shared the ensemble spirit embedded in the artistic vision, which was to ‘*build on a shared and collective sense of learning, trust and quality*’ and aimed to cultivate such ensemble spirit

into the overall process of business operation of the company. This rethinking of the learning organisation ambition through creation of an ensemble organisation was clearly stated in the company's Annual Report (2005-2006): *'Ensemble is at the heart of the Dream's vision. We believe that in working together, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts'*. Moreover, the ensemble company ambition is written into the company's Strategic Plan 2006-2012, as follows:

'Our work is created through the ensemble principles of collaboration, trust, mutual respect, and a belief that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. We want to inspire artists and staff to learn and make theatre at the same time.'

There have been a number of efforts aimed at developing a learning organisation by enhancing the ensemble spirit across the company. One initiative involved extending the access of training sessions in the Artistic Development Programme (such as singing, dancing and body movement, etc.) to organisation members undertaking business-oriented practice. Previously, sessions in this programme were primarily available to the performing actors. The initiative was aimed at providing an informal opportunity and atmosphere where people from different parts of the organisation could interact with each other. As indicated earlier in Section 4.2.2.3, many employees are particularly attached to their type of organisation and want to 'feel close to' it. However,

because of the fragmented nature of the organisation, people feel less attached to the idea of an ensemble organisation. By having the opportunity to access sessions in the Artistic Development Programme, employees are helped to *'feel close to'* to the organisation. As one interviewee indicated, by having access to the above programme, it has helped members of staff in the 'office world' feel better linked to the artistic side and feel the ensemble spirit. As she stated:

'It makes it real this idea that this company is an ensemble. It helps to make that feel real ...I think there are lots of the Dream people working not in a creative role. But it's nice to feel close to that. And I think it helps to try and overcome what can be a very split organisation... There is always that feeling because the administrative side is serving their creative genius partner. So the more you can do to make the administrative side feel better about itself and to make it feel linked in with the artistic side, I think, the better.'

By addressing the issue of being a somewhat fragmented organisation, the above management initiative could be beneficial to those employees interested in learning about their company and the ways in which it operates in other departments. As the in-house lawyer indicated, people like the fact that everybody is given a chance to learn and to engage in their job. She mentioned, for example, that both her assistant and she were very passionate about going to

the singing classes, where they could meet a mixture of people from different parts of the company (e.g. people from the accounting and finance department, or from the education department). She described such experience as '*great fun*' and helpful in '*overcom[ing] what can be a very split organisation*'.

Another initiative under the ensemble company spirit focuses on improving the existing communication system within the company. As indicated in Section 4.1.1, the formality and top-heavy structure of the organisation has created difficulties in engaging more interactive communication among hierarchical and departmental boundaries.

To address this problem, the executive and artistic directors have been looking at ways of breaking down the formality of some of the work meetings, such as the staff quarterly meetings and staff forum, to encourage more interactive conversations across working boundaries as well as to promote a bottom-up communication approach. The restructured meetings focus on inviting group discussion of specific topics, especially those related to the latest organisational issues. One interviewee described the changes made to improve the communications system in the following way:

‘So we are looking at ways to try to break that down so that you don’t come with your department, but get cross-organisational communication; and also ways of breaking

down those meetings by giving them a topic or several topics to focus on in smaller groups and then giving feedback as a whole group. The topic might be what we have learnt from certain events or it might be a specific topic looking to the future like “what do we want to do about ...?” ’

As indicated earlier in Section 4.2.2.2, work meetings are important learning opportunities where people can discover what is going on around them and how other people are progressing with their work. Some employees find such learning opportunities in the new changes being made in the organisation’s communication system. In the following interview account, the respondent demonstrated that the new communication approach promoted within the company has given her the opportunity to learn more about the work of others. She commented:

‘One good example is the working relationship I have with a senior member of staff. We were trying to ...have about two hourly meetings a month and we tried to say that it is just a sort of informal meeting about what’s going on in our worlds. We don’t have any agenda set up. We just catch up with what each other is doing so that I get the real insight into the challenge, you know, that she faces. Equally, she gets the insights into the challenge that I am facing. And then the

autumnal meeting is very specifically about what's happening at the moment. ...Are they working well? Are they not working well? How do we keep progressing that? I would say it's a fantastic model of working in order to keep communication going.'

In parallel to the above initiative of improving the formal communication system, the senior management has also considered promoting informal opportunities for social interactions and communication on the job in order to encourage people in different parts of the organisation to learn about the company and each other's work. For example, the idea of 'shadowing' has been promoted, which encourages members of the organisation to visit different parts of the company and seek opportunities to shadow their colleagues informally on the job. Moreover, it has also been suggested that each department organise a brief presentation about their work for those in other departments. In addition, the Artistic Director has suggested having regular weekly lunch meetings where people from different parts of the organisation can meet informally during lunch breaks to discuss work or other issues. Initially, these initiatives were attempts to provide opportunities for people to gain better understanding of each other's work and to learn from each other's experience. However, as one of the interviewees pointed out, these opportunities were available on a voluntary basis and have not been happening

consistently.

In addition, two sub-groups were set up under the heading of 'Dream as a learning organisation' with the broader aim of helping the senior management team to foster the process of developing the company into a learning organisation. At the time of data collection, the groups were named as the External Facing Group and the Internal Facing Group respectively. The initial meeting agenda set for each group was four times a year with the head of the education department appointed to chair each meeting. By the time the two sub-groups had been set up, there was no clear statement on the specific objectives of setting up these groups. In one of the internal group meetings that I was allowed to attend and observe, the meeting was more information-based than discussion-oriented. Initially, the chair of the meeting took control of the sequence of information flow. However, the focus of the meeting was soon deflected by the Executive Director's comments and opinions, and the meeting eventually shifted into general discussion.

As shown in the above paragraphs, management interest in recommitting to a learning organisation ambition has resulted in a number of initiatives that seem to stimulate learning by providing opportunities for staff members to become more engaged in their jobs and their organisation. However, these initiatives

have also created tension and conflict of interests that can serve also to limit learning experiences.

One form of tension is that the management initiatives have created a split focus between the demands of a manager's managerial role and the demands of their practical role. For example, as mentioned earlier in Section 4.2.2.4, the Technical Director described the task of working with a group of architects and building planners in the organisation's redevelopment projects as 'additional' to his 'day job' (putting on shows). He stated that the management ambition for a learning organisation had created a split focus in his work; a problem faced by many others affected by this critical period in the company's history. This problem is highlighted in the following account by the interviewee:

'The most difficult thing about it is that I've got what I affectionately call my day job, which is the Technical Director of the Dream. In that capacity, I put on plays and I run the workshops... In the last year or so, there has been an additional role onto that job, which is to engage with all of the redevelopment people ... In order to make a good contribution to their work, you've got to get yourself up to speed very quickly ... [However], I've been busy doing whatever I've been working on. So I think it's hard to pick up

all the threads of something that's moving so quickly and make an intelligent contribution to it.'

Similarly, another production staff member in the voice coaching department indicated the issue of having a split focus in her work in the following comment:

'That (making productions) is the major focus, but I also need to solve problems about staffing, spacing and scheduling. However, I am not in the right place always to do that... There are all sorts of jobs that need to be done in order to fulfill both the demands of my managerial role and the demands of my practical role, which is to do with the production.'

In addition, the same respondent above pointed out that having a split focus is a general issue faced by many other employees. She stated:

'Everybody has the same problem. It's not just me. We have to work to get the show on. That's the most important thing. In addition to that, we are solving other problems. There is a split focus.'

The difficulty of having a split focus is closely linked to another issue addressed by many interviewees, namely the difficulty in finding time to

nurture learning from a local practice point of view. There is competition for time resources between the demands of existing workloads and the demands of emerging learning initiatives for management interest. As revealed by a number of interviewees, many of the organisation's employees have already been under enormous time pressure with their existing workloads and the fast pace of work. One of the respondents addressed the issue clearly as follows:

‘The challenges are the workloads and the pace that people work at because people work very long hours, and six or seven days a week. Often, they do not get their holidays...Therefore, they are working very hard.’

However, the workloads have been increasing significantly in recent years since the company entered a transformation stage for its redevelopment in many dimensions as a result of new management interests and initiatives. Not only have such interests and initiatives created a split focus in employees' 'day jobs', but they have also created competition in terms of time allocation for the fulfilment of all of the roles required of employees. An underlying cause of such competition lies in tension related to the different time-orientation of diverse interest groups. As a senior production manager indicated, the company is generally led with a management mindset that is 'always looking forward'. However, such a future-oriented mindset conflicts with the need to 'look back' and 'be a little bit reflective' from a practical point of view. This problem was

described by the respondent in the following words:

‘We don’t go into enough depth about the experience that we’ve just been through and what we’ve learnt from that... That’s partially because we are always looking forward: what happened yesterday was yesterday. We’ve got to do today and worry about tomorrow.’

The Technical Director addressed the same issue by emphasising that people rarely found time to learn from the past. Instead, they were pushed to move forward due to the fast-moving work pace of the organisation. The respondent commented:

‘Once we’ve done something, we work at such a pace that we don’t look back at what we’ve done. No, we just move onto the next one... You should be able to look back at what you’ve done and learn from it in order not to make the same mistakes again ...I don’t think it happens... We are just moving so fast. We start the next project before the last one is finished.’

Moreover, another organisation employee pointed out a dilemma faced by the company with regard to how best to nurture those learning initiatives with squeezed organisational time. In the words of the respondent:

‘One of things that is challenging that notion is the fact that everybody is just so busy, just doing and just getting the stuff on the stage, and just achieving what they’ve got to achieve. To be a learning organisation in the way that somebody would describe it to us, you sometimes have got to stand back and experiment and be prepared to fail.’

The company manager highlighted the problem in the following account:

‘The company has many good initiatives about learning but what is lacking is nurturing...You need time to learn, to be able to hold back and be reflexive.’

Another organisation employee made a similar comment by indicating that although there have been many efforts in the organisation to pursue learning, lack of time has been a major obstacle to realising this good intent. In the following accounts, the respondent explained this problem by relating it to his specific area of practice. He observed:

‘The organisation is willing to help people with its learning. It is a very willing organisation; but in reality, sometimes there just isn’t the time for learning. For instance, our IT work splits into proactive and reactive. Reactive is when things go wrong, where we are all reacting to a requirement that comes

out of the blue ... At times the proportion of the reactive aspect of our work is very high, which means the proactive aspect of it diminishes considerably. [We] consider learning really means the proactive that is something you fit into the reactive activities. At the time, we just don't have time to learn - there are times when we do -but at the moment, we hate the experience that we don't.'

This is because no one in the organisation has really got the time to nurture those initiatives and efforts due to their existing workload. As the company manager explained:

'...We haven't got someone who really has got the time to nurture. Nurturing is difficult here because of people's workload; how busy they are. I found nurturing is undernourished. That's what I would like to see – going back to learning to nurture someone so they could actually learn and move on and progress. Nurturing, I think, we lack.'

In addition, prioritising is considered a related issue to the above tension between the demands of both existing workloads and emerging learning initiatives. As one interviewee pointed out, the company does not seem to have a habit of prioritising its tasks and initiatives:

‘We don’t take our ideas and necessarily prioritise them, think about them, chaff them around and throw some out.’

Because of the above issues (existing workload, time pressure, and lack of nurturing, as well as priority problems) leading to difficulties in their practical, daily work, organisation employees have become reluctant to become actively engaged in responding to those management initiatives. As one respondent revealed:

‘That [the workloads and the pace at which employees work] prevents us taking on board any new initiatives and the learning organisation as a new initiative ... I do try to have meetings about productions with production managers. We do try to share problems that the production manager is having with the guy who makes costumes or whatever ... I do think that contributes to the learning organisation. However, it is difficult when people are so busy. It is very difficult because there just is not time to sit back and be reflective about it.’

Meanwhile, people have become more cautious about promoting ideas and making suggestions because doing so could inevitably lead to increased workload and time pressure. As one of the above respondents pointed out, sometimes keeping ‘quiet’ is the simplest solution to avoid such ‘extra work’. He expressed this in the following words:

‘In this organisation, it’s very easy to come up with many ideas and you then are landed with them. You can then increase your workload tremendously. [e.g. someone would say to you] “That’s a good idea. Why don’t you do it?” Then you think “That’s not what I meant” ... So sometimes I will keep quiet because I know if I mention anything, I will get lumped with it. Now that’s not very positive but I am also a human being with a life.’

Moreover, other interviewees noted that the current learning initiatives are really ‘missing the trick’ by ‘ignoring’ and ‘forgetting’ the learning outcomes from unsuccessful experiences. In general, the organisation’s employees are ‘scared to fail’ because ‘failing’ is something that is not tolerable in the Dream’s organisational culture. One interviewee stated:

‘...failing is not something this organisation wants to do or can do or takes very easily. Because failing means, in my context, in my world, it means you don’t get a show on stage in time or you haven’t got the costume finished or the budget doesn’t work or something. And that’s not acceptable to anybody, including me. So you need a bit of time to be a learning organisation and you need to be a little bit reflective.’

Views consistent with that above were given by other interviewees, who commonly indicated in the following accounts that the company has not learned how to benefit from employees' learning experiences:

‘We have a tendency to forget what made an experience not very good and go back and put ourselves in the same situation again. There are many reasons for that. But the reason that we do it is that we haven't necessarily learnt anything from the previous experience.’

Another interviewee stated:

‘From a learning point of view...this company has more attitudes to learning and learning process than any other company that I have worked in, but it doesn't know how to benefit from them . As I said, it's not very good at informing itself from a learning process.’

The same interviewee continued:

‘The experience is lost. The effect of the experience is lost ... [it is] very difficult to benefit from the learning experience because that expression of learning is diluted.’

One underlying reason for the loss of learning experience is that those who have

experienced learning are not necessarily in the position to inform others about their learning outcomes. This point is illustrated in the following interview account:

‘I think the problem is ...it’s exactly that ... people who experience the problem, who do the learning aren’t necessarily people who take the decisions to inform us about whether we get ourselves in that situation again or not. So if you have a band of management that makes the decisions and people below them are put into scenarios which are uncomfortable, people who are comfortable don’t do any learning. But if they [the person experiencing the learning] are not capable of informing people about it, then those decisions get made again and again. So the learning ability is lost because it’s not experienced by people who make the decisions.’

The above interview quote shows that learning experiences usually emerge in the local process of undertaking particular work practices for those who participate in such local context. However, these participants were not necessarily given the opportunity to participate in important decision making process related their work practices and therefore do not have formal means to inform their learning experiences especially when such experiences are associated with particular

problems on the site. In contrast, managers who sit on the higher ground and do not usually understand or experience the situations involved in the local context of work practices are often in an authentic positions to make decisions that may not necessarily match with the work needs of those participants from their learning experience point of view.

A similar comment was made by a different respondent from the production side of the organisation:

‘I feel frustrated sometimes by the fact that there are not the forums and places to express my frustrations in terms of scheduling rooms and space, those sorts of things. Forward planning is a real problem for us because we are not all involved in that. Some decisions are made by other people and then we respond to them. It’s that responding sometimes is difficult because the decisions are made when you are not always part of it and you hear about them and you respond to them in the best way you can.’

An example of the above problem of lacking of means to inform learning experiences was given by an employee working on the production side of the company. The company had had a previous experience of failing to get a show on stage on time for the first performance. To learn from this failure, the

production staff met with another colleague to diagnose the causes of the problem, which seemed to be linked to a number of input elements in the organisation. However, such learning outcome was not passed on to the rest of the organisation. The interviewee pointed out that ‘the learning effects are in the memories of the people who put them together in debriefs’ because there was no such structure in the organisation to allow them formally to announce those learning outputs. As he explained in the following words:

‘There isn’t a way in this company by which to lay down any formula that responds to these situations. If you were about to come to the company, there isn’t a document you can pick up which says the design needs to be changed, the specification needs to be controlled. So it’s too easy, - what I am saying is – as a company, we know a lot of these reasons but there isn’t a single document that actually says this is the way how not to fail again.’

Finally, there is also a tension associated with holding and cancelling meetings. As indicated earlier in Section 4.1.1, working meetings were the key formal mechanisms for people to communicate with each other. In addition, as indicated in Section 4.2.2., from a learning point of view, some employees took work meetings as opportunities to learn from each other’s experience and to receive important information about their company. As the human resource manager

described:

‘It’s a very important time because it’s a time when people who don’t’ necessarily see the Artistic Director and the Executive Director get a chance to meet them face-to-face and to ask questions and to hear about changes of the company directly from them.’

Despite the important role played by the formal work meetings, there is a tendency in the company to cancel meetings or avoid attending meetings as a trade-off for a quick solution to time pressures. A number of interviewees commonly addressed this issue. The technical director indicated that sometimes he had to cancel or delay departmental meetings in order to secure time to put on shows on time. The respondent made this point in the following way:

‘When people are so extraordinarily busy, the first thing that gets stopped is going to departmental meetings; you can’t stop the work on the show because the show has got to open; but actually it’s very easy to say we will scrap the departmental meeting this week. Let’s not to have it this month and we will do it next month.’

Another interviewee, also concerned about such a temporary approach to resolving time pressures, commented:

‘We need to find ways of not cancelling meetings, and actually trying to problem solve more quickly. However, it’s always been the problem in this company because to begin with, our prime purpose is to put on shows. Those needs must take priority over other things. Everybody is very busy on the other productions. Everybody has his own focus working on the production; but also they have to oversee and to manage other areas. It is very difficult to get through to people. Sometimes you miss out because you are not in the right place at the right time... There is always that pull between the work on the production and the other work we need to do.’

The respondent indicated further that sometimes it was frustrating to see that the meetings she was expecting to attend had been cancelled due to time issues:

‘Time is the biggest issue because people are in the wrong place. They are here and there... because we are all very busy. People have to try to grab them whenever you can ... Sometimes you have to book a meeting three weeks away. By the time you get to that time, the meeting has been cancelled. I had one meeting cancelled three times and moved three times.’

4.4 A SUMMARY

To summarise, this chapter has first described the learning activities involved in the Dream Theatre under two broad categories: learning activities situated in production-oriented practice and business-oriented practice. The learning activities are summarised in Table 4.1.

This chapter has also reported findings on the management interests in learning and the initiatives taken in respect of this management interest. A summary of this management interest in learning and the corresponding learning initiatives, as well as the learning activities affected are listed in Table 4.2.

TABLE 4.1 SUMMARY OF LEARNING ACTIVITIES IDENTIFIED IN THE CASE DREAM THEATRE

The learning activities situated in production-oriented practice
a. Learning to exist in different teams b. Learning the process of production making c. learning to problem solve quickly as problems emerge d. learning to let things go
Learning activities situated in business-oriented practice
a. Learning to collaborate b. Learning from others' experience c. Learning about the company and how things work in other parts of the company d. Learning to deal with unusual roles on the job e. Learning about one's role

TABLE 4.2 SUMMARY OF MANAGEMENT INTERESTS IN LEARNING AND LEARNING

INITIATIVES IN THE CASE OF THE DREAM THEATRE

Management interest in learning	Learning initiatives
Becoming a learning organisation (initial exploratory stage)	Holding organisation learning meetings Providing a training programme on the subject of leadership
Becoming a learning organisation (recommitment stage)	Opening the artistic development sessions to more organisation employees Initialising informal communication and informal social-interacting opportunities Restructuring formal work meetings Setting up two sub-groups under the heading of 'Dream as a learning organisation'

CHAPTER 5: LEARNING IN RAINBOW THEATRE

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Similar to Chapter 4, this chapter provides a descriptive analysis of the learning activities evident in the Rainbow Theatre. In order to illustrate these learning activities within the context in which they are embedded, this chapter first offers a brief introduction to the organisational background of the Rainbow Theatre and the overall process of production making involved in Rainbow's theatre making. Following this, descriptive accounts of each learning activity identified are provided. Given the fact that production making and business administration comprise the two main working areas of a producing theatre company, the findings are reported around two broad categories: learning emerging through production-oriented practice and learning emerging through business-oriented practice. Finally, the chapter provides a report on management interests in learning and its initiatives which aims at stimulating learning experiences for the organisation's employees.

Thus, the structure of the rest of Chapter 5 is as follows: Section 5.1.1 offers a brief overview of the organisational background of the Rainbow Theatre. Section 5.1.2 describes the overall process of creating theatre productions in the Rainbow Theatre. Section 5.2 reveals the learning

activities emerging through both production-oriented practice and business-oriented practice at the Rainbow Theatre. Section 5.3 describes the nature of management interests in learning and its initiatives aiming at stimulating learning experiences for the employees. Section 5.4 summarises the empirical findings of the case of Rainbow.

5.1.1 ORGANISATION BACKGROUND

Founded in 1913, the Rainbow Theatre has been one of the leading national producing theatre companies in the UK. As a 'producing theatre', many of the plays and performances on both of Rainbow's stages are produced entirely by the company. The company has two theatre sites based in one city, the larger seating a maximum of 824 people and the smaller seating up to 190 people. The company has introduced a range of new and foreign plays to the British theatre repertoire, and has been a springboard for many internationally acclaimed actors, designers and directors.

Like the case of Dream Theatre described in Chapter 4, the Rainbow Theatre is also a limited company and registered charity, having a board of voluntary directors who meet approximately five times per year. The Board has a Finance Committee, which meets a further five times per year. The Board directly appoints the two most senior executives - the Artistic and Executive Directors. The Artistic Director of the Rainbow is in charge of the overall working aspects of production-making, being

responsible for making decisions about artistic teams as well as directing plays and performances presented by the company on both of its stages. In addition, the Artistic Director sets artistic policies, and guides the entire organisation towards achieving artistic excellence. The Artistic Director also chooses and invites other associated artistic directors to work for the Rainbow Theatre. The Executive Director of the Rainbow oversees the business side of the company. The Artistic and Executive Directors are supported on the senior management team by the Finance Director, General Manager, Head of Production, Education Director, Associate Director (Literary) and Associate Producer. In terms of long-term financing, the Executive Director works with the Finance Director to set long-term budgets for the company in order to achieve the artistic vision within budgets. The General Manager is responsible for the well-being of the physical infrastructure of the Rainbow and its services, the company's personnel and its customers as well as planning and implementing long-term business strategy for the theatre.

Under the above senior management team, the theatre is operated through functional departments and teams, some of which focus on production-oriented practice and others on business-oriented practice. For example, the team in the Production Department has overall responsibility for co-coordinating all technical aspects of the process of producing a piece of theatre. The team in that department must co-

ordinate the other departments/teams that build and paint sets and props, as well as the lighting and sound teams, wardrobe, wigs and stage management, ensuring that all of these elements come together on time and within budget. With a different focus, marketing and press teams are responsible for promoting all the performances put on in the Rainbow both onstage and backstage. The marketing teams use a variety of methods to communicate with the public, including the theatre's website, printed materials like posters and leaflets, direct mail letters and email newsletters to people on the theatre's database, advertising and media collaboration.

The Rainbow Theatre builds and produces an average of twenty productions each year, ranging from small-scale development work to full-scale musical productions. Most of these production works are delivered on-site. In order to facilitate this, the theatre houses a large wood and metal workshop where sets are constructed. It has a paint shop where sets, cloths and large props are painted. It also has sound engineering studios, a wardrobe department where all costumes are cut, fitted and sewn, and a wigs and make-up department where prosthetics and special effects make-up are produced and wigs are handmade. There is also a props department where furniture and smaller items are created. The Rainbow Theatre has two rehearsal spaces where actors work under direction for approximately four weeks before the opening performance of a show.

There are a number of approaches to communications within the company. Update meetings and departmental/team meetings are held monthly. Also held monthly is an update meeting, usually chaired by a member of the senior management team, to which everybody across the company is invited. In those meetings, the attendants are normally invited to share work updates, to discuss specific topics in groups or pairs and to provide feedback. Similarly, the departmental/team meetings are occasions where the heads of departments update their teams on what is going on within the company as well as seek opinions and feedback from the employees. As one manager indicated, such work meetings are opportunities for members of staff to feedback from their own area especially when they have learning needs and concerns. The same manager also pointed out that focus on receiving employee feedback was a fairly recent development. It had been implemented as a consequence of the management team's desire to explore ways of restructuring their work meetings to make them more interactive and discussion-based and less information-based. In this regard, a number of interviewees pointed out that in their view, the restructured meeting format was quite adequate and useful in providing a channel for people to air their voices. In the words of one of the interviewees:

‘... that we are having these monthly update meetings

where all the staff teams are invited. It's quite

egalitarian, and we talk about different things. That's very good and I am very much in favour of that. That's very positive. I did have a very interesting discussion with a senior manager who believed that we should be careful not to have too much talking shows. I actually don't think those monthly meetings are a waste of time. They are incredibly productive and only last an hour. They are so important because they are about people being heard and people wanting to be heard.'

As regards to the overall organisational atmosphere of the company, many interviewees considered it an open and supportive company for which to work. Respondents with managerial roles indicated in particular that the company had an open-minded and supportive senior management culture. As the Head of Marketing described:

'We've got open minds and open ears. The senior management team wants to know what we think as individuals... and get our input. Within that culture, you are encouraged to share and to have ideas to try new things, and are supported to try different approaches... Some organisations have a corporate way of doing things and they want you to cooperate within a box. Here, there isn't a box...'

Some interviewees who were not in managerial roles held generally positive views because they felt that they were trusted and being ‘relied upon’ to do their jobs by being treated as an integral part of a larger picture. As one interviewee stated:

‘It’s a great place to work. There isn’t that much office politics. There isn’t a lot of mistrust. People feel like that they can raise issues there because no matter who you are, you are a valued member of staff; you all feel you are part of a bigger picture.’

In addition, some interviewees indicated that most people in the company were ‘approachable’, which was generally perceived as another aspect of the company’s culture. For example, an administrative officer mentioned the ease with which she could approach people across the company, even to those who were very senior. She explained:

‘If I need to speak to the Executive Director, I will just ring him. It’s the same with everybody. That’s really a positive point about this company - everybody is so approachable. If there is an issue, you get a variety of different people you can speak to. You haven’t just got always to go through your line manager, which I imagine might put a lot of people off.’

5.1.2 THE PROCESS OF MAKING A THEATRICAL PRODUCTION IN THE RAINBOW

As mentioned in the Dream Theatre case study, much production making in a producing theatre seems to follow a process. The Rainbow Theatre is no exception in this respect. In Vignette 1 below, an overview of the overall process of theatre making adopted at the Rainbow is outlined. Vignette 2 provides an examination of one particular procedure in theatre making: running a show from backstage. In the margin of each vignette is a summary of the major activities involved in running a show.

Vignette1: Making a theatre production in the Rainbow Theatre

Physical layout of backstage building

The Head of Stage (His real name is replaced with the pseudonym, Mark) showed me around the backstage building and pointed out the offices for the production staff as we passed through each corridor. The offices for The Artistic Director, the Production Department and the Stage Management Department were next to each other in the same corridor. There were doors opening from the inside of each office connecting to each other. The Head of Stage stayed in the same office with his Deputy Head of Stage. The Head of Production and his assistant also worked in the same

office. Along one of the corridors, there were some shelving units standing against one side of the wall with some used production props and card models placed on them.

Selecting actors & creative team

As Mark was showing me around the backstage building, he began to explain to me the process that was normally followed in all Rainbow's production-making projects. The process starts with the selection of a production. After the director decides on which production to make, he then selects the designers and the acting company (actors) for the production. The Casting Department works with directors to cast the candidate actors for every role in each play. At this stage for each show, a creative team is formed, which is normally made up of some or all of the following people: Director, Designer, Lighting Designer, Sound Designer, Choreographer, Musical Director, Dialect Coach and so on. The creative teams work together to plan the production for months before the rehearsals even start, and are heavily involved throughout the rehearsal and the building process of a show.

After selecting the acting company and the creative team for a production, the director and the designer(s)

then meet up and decide on the initial concepts for the show. After that, the designer produces a rough model for the design, which is then presented to the production team. This process is called Model Showing. The model is technically referred as the White Card Model (WCM), which is a 3-D miniature version of the set with all scenery and props scaled down to a scale of 1:25. The WCM functions as a communicating tool that represents the vision of the artistic director and the designers for the rest of the teams. It is also used as a point of reference when building the set and props.

Next, there is a consultation period where the production team is required to work out how best to implement the designer's ideas safely. They always need to prepare for uncertainty in their work. In the words of a stage manager, as one state manager commented:

‘Even as we are building the final agreed designs, there is still an element of the unknown because it isn’t on the stage yet; it’s still all in bits in the workshop!’

Whilst the set is being built, the designer works around the backstage building, monitoring the way in which all the design aspects are coming together. During the consultation period, the production teams attempt to eradicate as many problems as early as possible. For example, some of their feedback to the designer might be statements such as, 'No, you can't do that. It will fall over!', 'New solutions arise all the time.' As Head of Stage stressed, 'We hope through that process any problems are identified and removed'. In these situations, the designers need to revise the designs in response to feedback before passing them on to the production teams, again, for them to make the corresponding changes.

In addition, there are process meetings, which are normally held every two weeks as the show approaches its opening performance. This is the time when all the technical HODs, directors and designers as well as any other artists, sit together to focus on problem-solving for a particular show. They discuss every aspect of the production to pin-point as many problems as possible from different perspectives. This process was described by Mark in the following way:

the director could say, ‘I’ve got a problem with this, can you sort it out?’ The designer would then respond by saying, ‘These are the ideas, can we sort it out’. Alternatively, if it is a lighting problem, someone would say, ‘The lighting is really bad, we need to redo this. ...can you see any problems?’ As Mark stated, ‘It is a very open, point-by-point conversation. ... The more problems you can solve, the fewer there are on stage.’

Work together informally

Even within production teams, as Mark highlighted, the process of making a production is being ‘constantly evaluated’. The production staff are able to knock on each other’s doors as often as they wish, as there is a very informal relationship among them. Production people can also join the weekly Technical HOD (Heads of Departments) meetings every Wednesday, where the heads of lighting, sounding, wigs, paints, wardrobe, and the stage manager talk through each show.

Rehearsing

While the production teams focus on turning designs into scenic sets and costumes, the actors and the creative team come together for rehearsals for a number of weeks before the opening performance.

This is an intensive period when these people need to ‘systematically work through the scenes’, as explained by an assistant director. Notes taken during the rehearsal time are known as rehearsal notes, in which the process of the rehearsal practice and every single change made to the production design are recorded. Rehearsal notes (if any are made) are passed on daily to production-supporting departments (such as wardrobe and costume, wigs & make-up and props, etc.) after each rehearsal to inform people of what is needed from their departments. For example, a rehearsal note might indicate which costumes or props are needed for the next rehearsal or changes that have been made to the production design.

Technical & dress rehearsals and opening of the show

Next on the agenda are technical rehearsals and dress rehearsals. These are generally the occasions when the work of all the production teams come together on stage for the first time to create a thorough, cue-by-cue mock show. The musical show that I watched from backstage during the shadowing had 190 lighting cues, 100 sounds cues, and 50 flying cues. As Mark indicated, any issues preventing a seamless performance are discovered and resolved on the spot.

If the show requires further amending work after rehearsals, the changes must be made quickly and sometimes even on the same day in order to ensure the show is ready for the Preview and the Press Night that usually follow a few days after technical and dress rehearsals. The Preview is a mock run-through of a full show in front of a small audience. It is the stage for tidying up and finalising the show before it opens to the public. The Press Night is when the show is run in front of public media, but usually without a general audience. The purpose of this show is to release relevant information (such as photo shots from the show) to the public and theatre reviewers.

Running a show

The opening of a performance is not necessarily the end-point of the process of making a theatre production. In fact, the process continues as the various teams start to run the show live from backstage.

(Source: 17th Dec 2007 Field Work Diary)

As exhibited in Vignette 1, the process of making a theatre production involves various procedures with a repertoire of different professional practices including directing, designing, performing, set-making and

costume-making, stage operating, light and sound operating and so on. Three points implied in the Vignette 1 are worthy of particular attention. First, the procedures involved in the process of production making do not follow a simple linear sequence, but are interrelated. For example, as indicated in Vignette 1, designers need to interact on a regular basis with people who transform their designs (such as craftsmen or costume makers) so that both parties can make the best of each other's work through the exchange of opinions and the giving of feedback.

Secondly, problem solving is an integral part of the process of production making, because identifying and removing problems are fundamentally the everyday responsibility of production staff. To some extent, these people do not consider such problems as 'problems', but see them as the necessary steps to pass through in order to deliver quality performances on stage on time. Thus, the practicality of production making requires the staff directly involved actively to look for and expect problems. For example, as indicated in Vignette 1, procedures such as model showing, stage fitting, and rehearsals (including technical and dress rehearsals), as well as process meetings and technical HOD Meetings, are the very working activities embedded in the process of production making, providing opportunities for constant evaluation of the progress made and recognition of potential problems.

In Vignette 2 below, focus is on describing the process of running a show.

Vignette 2: Running a show from backstage

Walking in the dark

Luckily, I was allowed to shadow the Head of Stage today. It was one of the performance days for the Rainbow's Christmas show. It was a two and a half-hour musical. The production staff had run the show thirty times before. They had to do it again twice today. I quietly followed Mark into the backstage area. The only thing that I was able to recognise clearly as we entered was some visible part of the stage and rows of audience in the auditorium because it was the only place mildly illuminated by some lighting. As we turned to the back of a massive curtain hanging between the main stage and backstage area, it was difficult to see anything due to the darkness. However, I could 'hear' the performance from the backstage.

Mark took me to a bridge-shaped area high above the stage (the crew refers it as Upper Stage Right), where I had an overview of both the stage and backstage. As we moved up to the top, I followed him very carefully

as there was no proper walkway. The entire area was very stuffy and dotted with black curtains.

It looked a little bit brighter on Upper Stage Right, enabling me to discern the surroundings more clearly.

I could see what was happening underneath us. Mark pointed out to me that some of his stage crew were moving around the backstage collaborating with other teams to ensure the smooth running of the show.

Operating the stage 'in silence'

During the second half of the show after the interval, we moved down to the main backstage area and stood behind some operational facilities where two of Mark's colleagues were sitting. As the Head of Stage explained to me, the area where we were standing was the main operating area of that show. The people working in front of us were the Deputy Stage Manager (DSM) and the Assistant Deputy Stage Manager. The operation of the stage for each show (such as lighting, scene changing, and sounding) is under the guidance of a DSM. This means that a DSM coordinates and remains in charge of all the 'communication' and 'actions' among the different teams involved in the show. I saw the DSM was communicating her instructions using a central controlling device by

sending audio and lighting signals to the involved supporting teams (such as backstage crew, lighting technicians and sound technicians, etc.) working on the show.

Using a shared tool

Normally, there is no direct communication among other stage staff during the running of a show. The DSM controls whose headphone device is activated or muted according to whether someone needs to prepare to respond. The DSM uses cue sheets to give corresponding vocal instructions spontaneously when sending light signals. Cue sheets indicate all the acts and scene changes for a show; all cues are numbered for different implications. By acting on each cue from the technicians and other production practitioners, a theatre production becomes a live performance. For example, when a sound technician reacts to a sound-cue, the acoustic effect of the show is evident. Similarly, a backstage worker can change scenery background or fly an actor by responding to a scenery-cue.

As Mark explained, production supporting teams use different cue sheets, which are all based on a general cue sheet (several versions of which might be

produced over time) given to them by a production manager before the technical rehearsals. For example, on the general cue sheet, there are guidelines on scene changes. The backstage crew usually personalises the general cue sheet by indicating the specific actions for which different team members are responsible. When the team starts to run the show, everybody has to look out for their action cues and act on the DSM's signals accordingly.

(Source: Fieldwork Diary on 17th Jan 2008)

Vignette 2 unfolds the process of running a show from backstage. As it reveals, different production supporting teams have to cope with a rather unique working environment as they run the shows. It is vital for them to be able to see and walk through the dark surroundings which would be very difficult to navigate for an outsider like me if I were not guided by an insider. At the same time, individuals also need to be able to read signals and react to these signals appropriately as a way of communicating and collaborating with other people involved in running the show. As observed, the operation of the show relies largely upon the coordination of a mediator (the DSM) and the use of some commonly accepted tools and symbols (such as the cue sheets, lighting signals, etc.) among these groups of people. Moreover, Vignette 2 shows us the very practical nature of the show process, which requires fluency and

accuracy in every action. This means that the people involved need to know exactly where to be and what to do at which point in time because the contents of a show and the sequences of corresponding actions are ‘scripted’ during a running show (as recorded on the cue sheet) and must be followed without interruption. In this respect, there is a need for both strict discipline and practicality.

5.2 LEARNING ACTIVITIES PRESENT IN THE CASE OF RAINBOW

This section reports on the learning activities evident in the Rainbow Theatre according to two broad categories: production-oriented practice and business-oriented practice. The rationale for adopting these two categories is the same as that explained in the Dream case study report.

5.2.1 LEARNING ACTIVITIES SITUATED IN PRODUCTION-ORIENTED PRACTICE

5.2.1.1 LEARNING TO BECOME A PRACTITIONER

One of the learning activities identified in the context of production-oriented practice is learning to become a practitioner. Part of this learning involves gaining the very experience of being engaged in a local process of practice and knowing exactly what to do and how to participate as a ‘competent practitioner’ (Brown & Duguid, 1991). For example, for stage operating crews, their learning is about gaining practical experience of doing things backstage, such as moving sets around, setting up scenes and matching scenes with actors’ performance

on the stage, etc. As the Head of Stage pointed out, learning for his team means that they need *'to be able to talk in the dark and not to make any mistakes'*. Such learning comes from the very process of doing and experiencing production-making activities.

Although the more experienced staff could sometimes teach the less experienced by telling them what and how to do, it was still important for individuals to experience the very process of production making step-by-step. Only until people are engaged in and participating in the process, can they learn that process. 'The best way to learn is to do it. It's through experiencing what it is like...', commented the Head of Stage. In this respect, the learning relates to doing the practice competently and the learning process is the very process of engaging in that practice (Wenger, 1998).

In Vignette 3 below, I examine more closely one of the practices involved in running a show: changing scenery. By showing how people engage in that process, the elements involved in 'learning to become a practitioner' in that concrete context are demonstrated. At the same time, by describing an 'accident' which happened unexpectedly in that process and which I bore witness to, it is possible to illustrate the nature of an unlearning experience.

Vignette 3: Changing scenery & a backstage
'accident'

David (a member of the backstage crew) was responsible for making scenery changes for a musical. Most scenery needs to be changed through counted weight ropes. In the Upper Stage area where David was working, I noticed a sequence of counted weight ropes hanging against the wall on one side. There were bases at the end of each counted weight rope with numbers and labels indicating the sequences of the cues and the names of the scenes. There were also colourful tape-marks on some ropes indicating whether a slow or fast action was required. Two electronic light tubes were fixed to the centre of the floor; one red and one green.

Every time the red light came on, I saw David move close to one of those ropes and wait. After seconds of waiting, the green light turned on. At the same time, I heard the DSM said through the earphone 'Scene 3 Cue 45. Go.' Simultaneously, I saw David start to pull down one of the counted weight ropes forcefully. He then rushed to another one and quickly released the weight on the rope. All this happened in a few seconds.

During the shadowing, there were many rounds of such actions. A few times, I saw another stage crew member come up and help David with scene changing.

How to read light signals

As Mark explained to me, the red light signals ‘stand by’. This means that whoever is responsible for a cue action has to be ready in position. The green light indicates it is action time. This means to carry out the action as indicated on the cue sheet. The stage crew needs to look out for these signals and to act on the cues promptly. Everybody knows that if anything goes wrong backstage, there could be a failure on the stage in front of the audience, which is the least tolerable thing for a theatre company. In this busy musical show, there were more than a hundred cues in total. Sometimes, Mark only had a few seconds for ‘stand by’ time between different cues. Hence, it was essential for him to be able to work competently and practically under such pressure. (This means he needed to know what to do exactly at any point during a running show.)

An ‘accident’ backstage

Everything seemed to be working smoothly that afternoon until a small ‘accident’ happened backstage. Sarah, a newly-joined team member, was on duty to

assist David in a scenery change for Human Flying (lifting an actor up above the stage). When they were doing this, Sarah accidentally activated the microphone on her receiving device, causing everyone else to become affected by background noise. Suddenly, I heard Mark and David call out to her spontaneously with urgent yet lowered voices, **‘Turn it off! Turn it off!’** However, Sarah did not seem to know how to deal with the situation and stood still looking desperate. Mark ran to her hastily and deactivated the microphone quickly. I then saw Mark give Sarah a light and quick pat on her shoulder and say, ‘not too bad’. No one blamed Sarah; at least I did not observe anyone blaming her during the day. Perhaps there had not been time for such blame. Although the ‘accident’ caused quite a tense moment backstage, the show continued to run normally as if nothing had happened. David carried on his ‘routines’ throughout the accident and afterwards, as did everyone else. After seeing that ‘moment’, I suddenly began to understand Mark’s earlier comment, **‘You never stop a show. The show has got to keep running!’**

The show ended in the audience's enthusiastic applause. Actors were taking bow after bow on stage. Perhaps none of the 'outsiders', apart from me, had noticed the 'performance' backstage. As Mark stated, **'The show is a successful show if the audience has never realised the stage crew existed!'**

(Source: Fieldwork Diary on 17th Jan 2008).

As described in Vignette 3, David's work shows that learning to become a practitioner in the context of making scenery changes involves a range of activities such as reading signals, finding the right 'rope' for each scenery change (given the dozens of ropes required for the particular show referred to above), responding with actions and so on. The need for precise and punctual responses in a collaborative task pressured people with time (e.g. reading lighting signals and running around in order to respond to different signals) and accuracy. As Mark stressed in a later interview, working as a member of the backstage crew, one must learn to be practical in order to collaborate with other members of the team in the fast-moving work phase backstage. Even for simple things such as using commonly-used tools properly during the process of changing scenery, it was necessary for inexperienced staff to learn on the job. This was clearly illustrated in the 'accident' described above. As the Head of Stage stated:

‘You need to be able to work in the dark and not to make any mistakes...You’d have to spend so much time on the stage to learn that...It’s learning that overview and that problem solving.’

As Mark indicated, this was the reason that when it came to task allocation, he always needed to take account of people’s practical experience rather than how much theory they knew. He usually let the less experienced staff start with simple tasks and then move on to more complex ones after they had accumulated some practical experience. As Mark explained further, the girl who caused the ‘accident’, learned to become a practitioner capable of handling several tasks involved in stage management work that she could not do before.

This girl came to the company as a graduate student with a degree in Theatre Management but had no previous practical experience of working in a theatre. The backstage head said he could still remember how ‘scared’ she was when she first came to work with the backstage crew. The same was true for the other theatre student who came with her and was also interested in the job. Both were stunned at the activity around them. As the Head of Stage described,

‘The first day they stand on this stage, they are scared because everybody else knows what they are doing. They don’t know what they are doing. They don’t

know what's going on. You know, you are all talking in a different language. The theatre has its own language and they get really scared.'

In the end, only one of the girls decided to take the job. As the Head of Stage indicated, although this newly-joined member was still not as competent as the other experienced members, she had been learning her way around by undertaking various small tasks (such as fitting smaller sets onto the stage, or moving sets during a running show) and by helping other crew members. As shown in Vignette 3, after about two months of 'learning', this relatively new member was allowed to help her colleagues to fly an actor onto the stage for a scene, which is something she would previously not have been capable of doing. The Head of Stage summarised her learning experience in the following account:

'Still, she isn't brilliant but she knows her way around. She knows about the stage. She knows how staff work. She knows how ... Now she is doing more and more. She is doing human flying on this. She couldn't do it before... She has learnt it in a practical environment.'

As the respondent emphasised, people in his area learn least from just being taught about theories. Engaging in the work in real practice is the

best way to learn the job. For example, stage ‘fitting’ is not only an essential part of the stage management practice for the stage crew, but also a fundamental opportunity for the crew to learn to do the job practically. As the Head of Stage indicated, his team can only understand what they are supposed to do and how to do it when they actually begin to do the work on stage. He stated:

‘You know, I could show the crew the model and say, “This is what it needs to look like”. I can show them photographs. I could give them my list of things that they need to be doing and when. [But it is] only when they actually come down on the stage, start working on the show and start doing the cues, learning how staff moves, where staff moves, when we go through cue-by-cue, [that] we learn it. We make it work.’

Similarly, the technical and dress rehearsals appeared to be other opportunities where the stage managing staff could learn together to make productions work on stage. As one of the staff members stated, rehearsals were situations ‘where I learn the show ... we are learning it. We are making it work’.

Learning to become a practitioner was not only identified in stage management work as demonstrated above, it also emerged in other production-oriented practice. During a shadowing opportunity at the

Wardrobe Department, I discovered how this learning activity unfolded in the process of costume making, which is reported in Vignette 4 below. At the start of this vignette, I introduce the context of the Wardrobe Department and its mode of operating; I then focus on illustrating the learning activities associated with that practice. In the margin of Vignette 4, the main points of the observational findings are highlighted.

Vignette 4: Learning in the process of making costumes

The Wardrobe Department implements the designer's costume designs and buys, hires or creates the costumes. The department is overseen by the Head of Wardrobe, who is also the supervisor of the other four people working (full-timers) in the department in terms of advising them on practical skills (such as sewing, costume making, etc). The supervisor is in charge of the budget for her department and responsible for liaising with the designers regarding their designs and needs. The other four full-time members are the ones who actually translate the designs into costumes. They ensure that costumes get made properly and on time. It is essential that the Wardrobe Department works closely with the designer

to identify the best way to interpret a costume. There is a huge amount of organising required to prepare for a production, such as taking inventory of all the costumes needed and preparing a schedule for when different costumes will be ready. At the beginning of rehearsals all the actors' measurements are taken. During the making process, the costume supervisor and designer usually make decisions and provide an overview of how to interpret the designs from a practical perspective, whilst the costume makers in the department translate the flat design on a sheet of paper into a full body costume.

Once performances start, the wardrobe department continues to be busy. Costumes often have to be laundered between performances, and there are always repairs and alterations to be made.

Procedures for costume making

Costume making involves varied procedures depending on whether costumes are new designs from scratch or modifications of existing ones. This process usually involves dealing with fabric, decoration and trimmings. Costume makers must have not only imagination and ingenuity, but more importantly practical skills such as cutting and sewing in order to

realise the divergent and often creative design requirements for each production.

For example, in order to create a particular period feeling or a design with a specific colour scheme, neutral fabrics are often dyed before they are cut and sewn into costumes. Some costumes are aged in some way to look worn or to show general wear and tear.

Ways of working

Members of the wardrobe team organise the tasks among themselves according to each individual's capacity and needs rather than working strictly to a job remit. For example, this means that they could cross-task by going through the process of making one piece of costume together whilst at the same time, working on specific tasks of costume making. The most experienced maker can sometimes supervise the others in the process of costume making for performances staged in the studio theatre. The less experienced costume makers usually start by making parts of the costume before they can be relied on to take greater responsibility in the overall process of making costumes for more complex shows.

The main workspace of the Wardrobe Department is a large open-space office where tasks such as designing, tailoring, sewing and ironing are usually progressed. Next to the main office, there is a laundry room where raw fabrics and costumes are washed and machine dried. Close to the laundry room, there is some space for the storing of raw fabrics in wardrobes. Costumes are hung around the room. On the other side of the corridor is the main common room with chairs and tables, which are sometimes used by the department staff at lunch break. The dyeing room is next to this area. Raw fabrics are often pre-washed and processed here to create artificial effects such as colouring. In the dyeing room, there is a wardrobe of common tools that are often used creatively to generate the desired effects. Common tools used could be a cheese grater, sandpaper, knives, a blow-torch, Vaseline, emulsion-based paints and so on. The list is as long as the costume maker's imagination and practicality allows. Next to the dyeing room is a small rest room with a squared table and two benches around it. The room is used for tea breaks during the day by the Wardrobe

Department as well as by the Lighting Department, whose office adjoins the tea room from the other side.

General working atmosphere

At the time of my visit, in the main office of the Wardrobe Department, live music from a BBC Radio 2 programme was being pumped through a loud speaker. Working materials were randomly laid out around several long desks in the room. Fabrics, design drawing packs, semi-made costumes, sewing machines, needle boxes, lacing materials, buttons, mannequins and other costume making-related tools were placed around the room. One of the workers was sitting at a desk putting buttons onto a costume and lacing them. On another side of the room, one maker was tailoring a man's shirt. The supervisor and a designer were standing next to each other on the other side of the room with a drawing pack laid on the table as if they discussing something. Carla (pseudonym), the person whom I was shadowing on that day, was the most experienced costume maker in the department with the exception of her supervisor. At the time, Carla was supervising the whole process of costume making for a studio show. On the day, she needed to prepare the fabrics for them to be ready for

use. So she was working around the department selecting fabrics, dyeing them and making sure they were washed and dried properly.

Costume makers learning from each other

There was considerable small-talk among the costume makers themselves while they were working. Most of the time their conversations were work-related such as asking each other's opinions on tasks that had been done or simply checking with each other about the day's events. For example, on that day, Carla was busy in the main room when one of the makers asked her to look at the tailoring lines that she had drawn on a piece of fabric. Carla looked at it and said, 'That line doesn't match ... that line has to be straight otherwise it doesn't match ... If you put that line back there ... because if you don't, it will get a bit more ...'. Carla's colleague nodded and responded in the following way: 'So if I cut it there ...' The costume maker then started to redraw the lines on the fabrics as Carla talked and pointed to her where to draw the tailing line.

Situations like this happened a few times when other costume makers in the room sought Carla's opinion. As one of the costume makers indicated in a later interview, Carla is the most experienced and skilled

worker in the department. Sometimes other makers would ask her for help if they saw or knew that she had a better or different way of doing something. As Carla herself also stated, the costume makers sometimes could learn from each other's experience when there was a chance to explore and ask questions.

Relationship between costume maker and the designer

For each production, there are drawings and colour printouts that show the desired effects of all the costumes. In order to translate the paper designs into full bodies of costume, costume makers sometimes need to question the designer directly in order to interpret the designer's vision. As Carla indicated, she would always check with the designer if she was uncertain about what was exactly needed for the design. She further indicated that many theatre designers work as freelancers. This means that they only work in the theatre occasionally during production time. Some designers prefer to work around different production departments throughout the making process, whilst others choose to give the makers a free hand when requested after initial discussions. As I was told, the designer who was present on the day I was at the theatre would normally

come in once a week before the rehearsal period. Since it was the rehearsal period at the time, he was usually backstage helping different supporting teams to transform the design.

One of Carla's tasks on that day was to dye a piece of fabric into a particular blue coloured theme for a costume according to the designer's brief. As I found out, the dyeing process is not simply a matter of mixing relevant dyeing materials and then waiting for the right colour to appear. The process involves different rounds of testing because the dyed fabrics need to be washed, rinsed and dried before it is possible to tell if the colour that holds after all the procedures will be the desired one. In brief, the actual dyeing outcome cannot be predicted simply by knowing which colour mixtures create particular colour themes.

Costume maker learning from the designer

I saw Carla dye three small samples of the fabric with different colour mixture options. All of the samples were in varying shades of a blue colour scheme. Although Carla had an idea of which one to choose, she was not sure if the designer would agree. For this reason, she showed the samples to the designer, who

was in the department at the time. She explained to him the colour mixtures that had been used for each sample and sought his opinion and preferences. The designer looked at each sample before expressing his preference, though pointing out that it was not the precise colour he had envisioned. The designer suggested that Carla should experiment a little more with the chosen colour by trying out more colour themes to see if she could enhance the shade. So Carla returned to the dyeing room and tried out a few more samples to show to the designer. Eventually they agreed on one of the colour themes before the costume maker was able to dye the whole piece of fabric.

(Source: field work diary 5th Feb 2008)

As Vignette 4 shows, the procedures for making costumes are multifaceted, varying from production to production, depending on the outcome and effects desired by artistic directors and designers. The general working atmosphere among the costume makers is quite informal and flexible. For example, there were music and news programmes playing in the background when they were working. In terms of task allocation, instead of being limited to specific jobs, everyone had the opportunity to try out different tasks in the process of making costumes.

At tea-break time on the day of my shadowing, I had some informal conversations with the costume makers. They shared the common view that learning for them involved engaging in the very practical process of costume making. In similar vein to the learning activity identified in the stage management work, learning to become a practitioner was also evident in the work of costume makers. For example, as one of the costume makers pointed out, learning for them was more than just knowing the names of fabrics and rules of cutting them by reading a book. Rather, learning was rather more about being engaged in the practice of transforming those fabrics into costumes. An interviewee emphasised that even for simple things like fabrics, it was not until she had touched and felt them that she would be able to know how to use them. The respondent described such learning in the following way:

‘It is through being on the job, handling the fabrics
that you learn. Most people learn by being practical’.

An example of this learning activity was described in Vignette 4, which is illustrated in the process of learning how to dye a piece of costume fabric described previously. As the example shows, although the costume maker had guessed how to mix the dyeing materials in order to achieve the most desirable effects based on her knowledge of the dyeing process, it was not until she started working on the dyeing process and trying out different options that she began to understand more about what she was doing and whether she was doing it in the right way. She

remarked that from previous experience, she realised that practice could keep one's learning outcomes alive. For that reason, she needed to learn continuously on the job by continuing the practice so that the learning experience would not be forgotten. As the interviewee stated:

‘The more you do something, the more that gets grounded in you...Unless you continue to pick these skills up and keep learning, you cannot really keep them. They're not something that stays with you... unless you keep practising and keep focused.’

Similarly, another costume maker also indicated that learning involved hands-on experience. As she indicated, one of the good things about her department was that every one had the opportunity to try out different tasks related to costume making. So the work was randomly allocated and organised among the costume makers themselves according to needs rather than according to a fixed job division. She pointed out that this way of working differed from other theatre companies of which she knew, where people working in a large department like hers were allowed only to do the same kind of task and did not have an opportunity to cross-task. She pointed out that she was going through learning curve at the time because she was beginning to learn how to make costumes for a period show. Her previous work experience had been in the area of costume making for contemporary productions. She stated:

‘For me, I’ve got a big learning curve to go through because I am working on a period drawing, and I’m learning new skills or new ways of doing things than if I was doing a modern garment... I mean, I’m learning a lot at the moment even though I’ve got experience in dressmaking.’

The respondent indicated further that she had a ‘*rose-tinted*’ view of learning in the present job because she was still relatively new to the job and she found that she could learn a wide range of skills on the job. She commented:

‘At the moment, I’ve got a rose-tinted view of learning because I’m new to the job, and it’s exciting. And I have a lot to learn... Working in the theatre, for me, has taken my learning along another curve... I’m learning on the job’.

5.2.1.2 LEARNING TO SOLVE PROBLEMS QUICKLY AS THEY EMERGE

Learning to solve problems quickly as they emerge is another learning activity identified in the Rainbow case study. This pattern of learning involves identifying existing problems as well as anticipating and removing potential problems during the process of making productions. As mentioned in Section 5.1.2, problem solving is integral to the process of production making because it is a ‘necessary’ procedure to go through in order to remove any obstacles that may prevent a satisfactory performance being put on stage. This learning activity is largely related

to the unwritten rule: ‘You never stop a show’, as mentioned earlier in Vignette 3. This is a rule that every production-making staff member generally complies with in their practice. Because a show cannot ‘wait’, any problems that may delay the opening of a show cannot be ignored or forgotten. Such problems must be resolved as soon as they emerge.

The urgency with which problems must be resolved is illustrated in the following situation. The stage crew once noticed several problems relating to storing and moving one piece of the main set during a stage fitting procedure. As required in the script, a pirate ship set needed to be stored at a corner of the stage but remain invisible to the audience when not in the scene. When the scene required it, the pirate ship also needed to be moved onto the stage as quickly and as quietly as possible. However, when the stage crew moved the pirate ship from the workshop to the stage area, they discovered that the set was too large to be stored temporarily behind other scenes on stage. In order to eradicate that ‘problem’, they decided to cut the pirate ship into two parts, hoping to hide them separately in two backstage corners. Although the storage problem was indeed solved after cutting the set, the crew was soon faced by another problem: the separated parts of the set could not be assembled onto the stage or separated off the stage as quickly as needed. At the same time, the team also noticed that there was a potential safety issue surrounding the moving of the sets because there was the risk that one side of the pirate ship would hit some members of staff working in

that area at the time the removal was needed. After trying out several options, they found that the best solution was to change the type of wheels under these set parts. Furthermore, by actually being there on the stage and moving those sets as if preparing for a real show, the stage operation crew found a better storage location point and movement track, which allowed the team completely to avoid the potential safety hazard.

The above accounts provide us with an example of *learning to solve problems as quickly as they emerge*, achieved by being engaged in the very process of production making. As the Head of Stage emphasised, such learning rested on accumulating experiences whilst on the job rather than on being trained in a formal educational context. The interviewee expressed this view in the following way:

‘You can teach somebody how to move that track.
(To) somebody (who) has never worked in the theatre before, you can say “Look. When that green light goes, you move that track”. That’s easy. If something goes wrong with that track, you can’t teach that. That’s experience. Unless somebody has worked in the theatre for years and has had the problem before and can immediately go “There is something wrong

with this track. I need to fix it.” You can’t know that within an academic background. You can’t learn that with a degree.’

In addition, the respondent highlighted the point that production staff could also learn how to remove potential problems in the production-making process in their evaluation meetings such as production meetings and process meetings. As mentioned in Section 5.1.2, these meetings were usually held once a week for evaluation purposes as productions were being made. These meetings were dedicated time for staff to resolve existing and potential problems or to seek ways of making improvements. Staff were also able to meet informally whenever there was a need for quick solutions to any problems. This was described by one interviewee in the following way:

‘The Head of the Workshop meets the Head of Production whenever he needs to. It’s very informal. The Head of the Workshop can go upstairs to George’s office and they will have a chat.’

5.2.1.3 LEARNING FROM THE EXPERIENCE OF OTHERS

Another learning activity is *learning from the experience of others*. This learning activity focuses on discovering new or different ways of doing the job that one is assigned to do. As mentioned earlier in the Dream Theatre case report, a producing theatre, as a form of non-profit

organisation, normally runs with financial pressures. As a consequence, formal learning opportunities through training are usually limited in such an organisation. Instead, people tend to learn informally from each other. The Rainbow Theatre was also faced with a situation similar to that of the Dream Theatre. One of the interviewees pointed out the reason for the need to learn from the experiences of others in their theatre:

‘There's no money in theatre, so you don't get training courses unless they're sort of health and safety and stuff like that; that you've got to have... So a lot of the learning is through learning off other people’.

Such learning is particularly relevant to members of staff who are relatively new to their jobs or have had less relevant experience than others. Referring back to one of the costume makers mentioned in Vignette 4, although she had had some experience of making clothes before her current job, she had had no particular experience in making costumes for theatrical shows, especially those having symbolic meaning for a certain historical period. So she was attempting to learn from other costume makers who had more experience of making those kinds of costumes. As she explained, she had gained considerable experience on the job by watching her colleagues and asking them to show her their ways of working. She stated:

‘In theatre you learn a lot of stuff by working with more experienced people than you... it's just passed down that way.’

Similarly, another costume maker indicated that she had been trying specifically to learn different ways of doing things from others’ experience:

‘I learn from people around me. Everybody comes to a job with different experiences, and you learn from others. You might be doing – you might both produce this, but you'll do it in a completely different way. And sometimes, say, if Carla was doing something, okay, that looks a quicker and easier method than what I was doing. I think we're always processing roles and we're always looking out for other people, such as how you do something to make tailoring quicker.’

The same respondent added:

‘I think it's a great way to learn in the workplace - watching people do things. I think that's the best way to learn.’

Another costume maker also made a similar comment by indicating the value of learning from others’ experience as a way of getting to

know/see different ways of doing things in order to extend one's own range of experience. The respondent commented:

‘I'd just say it's learning new things if somebody shows you how to do something differently or a new way of doing something....That's what I said earlier. What I said this morning was building on the skills you've already got.’

The respondent then pointed it out that the extent to which such learning is possible may sometimes rely on the experienced workers' willingness to pass on their skills to the less experienced. She stated:

‘So without Catherine's knowledge and passing some of that down, that would change how I see – I see how it would change how I would learn. I mean, I'm learning a lot at the moment even though I've got experience in dressmaking. Working in the theatre, for me, has taken my learning along another curve. ... I'm learning on the job.’

During my group interview with the above costume makers in their tea room, I also had the opportunity to talk to two lighting technicians who joined our conversation. One of them was Head of Lighting and the other was a member of his team. When they were asked about their learning experiences at Rainbow, both lighting technicians made the

point that they had learned from watching how other people did their work in the workplace. The head of the lighting department pointed out that his team would tend to learn from other team members by observing how they approached their work and by adopting their work habits. The respondent explained:

‘When you work on a lighting desk and stuff like that, you may do it one way; and then you'll watch somebody else do it and they'll do it a completely different way. You just learn in that way... Anything that you do you may do differently from somebody else, or somebody else will do differently and you'll just pick up and learn off other people. See, you're taught by people that have been here longer and that sort of stuff, that sort of way of learning the job.’

The other lighting technician stepped into the conversation and made the point that he could often learn from ‘just being nosy’ - by exploring with questions. He stated:

‘... Just being nosy, I suppose. That's how I learned. I would be nosy and just ask people what they were doing and why they were doing it, you know. There's no real formal way, especially in our industry. There's

no sort of formal courses or anything. You go into it... you learn the ways as you work.'

In a separate interview, a junior lighting technician explained that learning happened to her by observing and helping others and by doing things on the job. Learning involved picking up the experiences of others in terms of how they dealt with their work. She suggested that it was through such learning that she had become able to participate in more than one kind of backstage practice, and explained this is the following way:

'I started doing what those guys do down there (referring to stage operation crew), like putting the set in. I prefer doing lighting... both jobs, I learned on the job...it's not so much formal shadowing. But you learn by observing other people and helping people, and then you learn how to do it yourself. So yeah, there's very much a sort of way of being taught following your colleagues, kind of thing, people that do the same job but are more experienced than you to show you how to do something. And then you learn by doing that.'

Moreover, as far as the stage crew was concerned, learning from the experience of others seemed to be related to the opportunity embedded in the type of working culture of this group of people. This was exemplified in comments made by the Head of Stage that the team

‘spend a lot of time together’ and work ‘like a family’. Time spent together included even having to work together during Christmas time. Having such opportunities to stay close together as a team appeared to produce tight social bounding, which helped them to learn collectively on the job. In the words of the Head of Stage:

‘ ... They know what’s going on. They know what other people are doing at the time. They know where staff should be. They’ve done the show 30 times by now... They spend a lot of time together. They will even work over Christmas. They will work from Boxing Day with only a day off for Christmas Day. They will spend more time with the other six members of the crew. They regard each other as family and have become very close. They’ve got to know each other and there is a very tight bond.’

5.2.1.4 LEARNING TO DEAL WITH UNFAMILIAR TASKS ON THE JOB

For those in jobs closely associated with production-oriented practice, *learning to deal with emerging tasks on the job* comprised a major part of their work. This subsection elaborates on this particular learning activity. Change is perhaps one of the key features that shape the nature of a producing theatre. As indicated in Vignette 1, Section 5.1.2, although there are some routine procedures that every production-making process seems to have to follow, each production is still

different from another. There is always a novel element in that process that makes a specific production-making experience unique. This is a fundamental pursuit for an arts organisation. Even for a production that the company has put on before, the approach to re-explore and re-produce it is never the same. This point is clearly made by the Head of Production in the Rainbow in the following accounts:

‘This industry is not based upon “This is how it is done”. It is very flexible because different things are happening all the time.’

As the above account implies, handling different situations is perhaps an inevitable part of the working lives of those directly involved in the production-making process. The learning activity focused on in this section can be seen in the following example about the way in which costume maker and a craftsman learned to make a ‘giant floor cloth’.

As one of the costume makers mentioned, the normal nature of their job is to work with fabrics, decorations and trimmings, etc. However, they sometimes also need to learn to deal with other types of work with which they are not necessarily familiar when there is a need to swap work between different production-making teams. As the respondent pointed it out, swapping work is quite common backstage due to the collaborative nature of the production-making process. The respondent stated:

‘When somebody throws something at you, like making the mermaid tail, or says, ”I need a harness”; “I need you to make me a lion's mane”...., it's all stuff that you haven't done, but you have to find a way around.’

For example, the interviewee mentioned that she was once asked by one of her colleagues in the workshop to help him make a giant floor cloth for a show, something about which none of the costumers had any idea. All of them had to learn to deal with the situation when it arose. As the costumer recalled, when the fabrics were handed over from the workshop to the Wardrobe Department, the costume maker quickly noticed that the fabrics had been cut diagonally by someone in the workshop. However, the person who had done this was not aware at the time that the diagonal cut had made the warp and weft threads of the fabric play against each other, making it very difficult to use the fabrics. Even though the costume maker was not sure how to progress at that point, she was able to tell that there was a problem that needed to be resolved first, based on her existing knowledge and experience of fabrics. Therefore, she explained to the workshop that the initial design might need to be altered as a result of the problem. Thus, the costumers began to work together on the problem, which they managed to resolve as they experimented with different potential solutions. The costume maker stated that it was a collective exploration process on both sides

because initially, none of them had a clear idea about how best to deal with the new situation. They were learning to handle the new situation as they went along, which was clearly described in the following words of the costume maker:

‘Making a floor cloth is not my normal job. My normal job is to sew and sew clothes; not to sew strange things like headgear...We were kind of collaborating. None of us knew which way this was going... I had never made one of these before. I didn't have a clue where to start’.

The respondent indicated that dealing with such unfamiliar tasks had built up her learning experience. The interviewee also noted that her previous experience of working with fabrics was helpful for her to find a solution when facing a new situation. She commented:

‘I've got a good enough knowledge of fabric to be able to say, "Well, if you put a fabric on top of another, if one is stiff and one's shiny, the shiny one is going to move, and you're going to have to really be very careful in the way that you mount them together. I know that. So adding my knowledge of fabric, you can create something like this...He (the workshop

staff member) kind of learnt from that that he has to be a bit easier with the design’.

5.2.1.5 LEARNING TO WORK AS PART OF A TEAM

Another learning activity identified in the process of costume making was *learning to be part of a team*. As mentioned earlier in Vignette 4, the work in the Wardrobe Department is randomly distributed among the members according to needs rather than complying with a fixed job remit. Such need is to work collectively towards a goal, namely to put a show on stage. In this respect, the costume makers need to work as a team, taking shared responsibility for the overall process of costume making, rather than working in isolation with a focus on individual tasks. As one of the respondents indicated in the following account, it is very important for everyone in the department to learn to work as part of a team. This means that one needs to learn to be reliable for the work allocated to him/her and not to let the team down. Failure to learn this would cause problems for the team working towards accomplishing its goals. The negative impact of failing to learn in this respect is clearly indicated in the following interviewee’s account:

‘You have to learn to be part of a team. You have to learn that you cannot let that team down. If you do - it's not like being in an office where you can pick your

work up the next day. Whatever happens here, there is a deadline: that show has to go on. Therefore, if you haven't learnt to make sure you are reliable and punctual, then you're having an adverse effect on the whole department because you are not working as part of that team.'

Meanwhile, the interviewee talked about someone in the Wardrobe Department who failed to learn this important aspect of their work. The department once recruited a part-time staff member to assist with maintenance work (washing costumes, drying and ironing, etc.). The department emphasised the considerable importance of this person's assistance to the team because maintenance work could be very intensive, especially during a large show. However, one day, it was found out that this part-time staff member had not shown up for her shift. Her absence almost let the team down that day. As the respondent re-emphasised, to work as part of a team is very important to their learning:

'One day she didn't phone in ... and on a big show like a musical, there were five loads of laundry plus hand washing, plus everything else, and plus all the ironing to be done -- You need people to be reliable. I think that's why the learning on our part takes on a different life as well.'

5.2.2 LEARNING ACTIVITIES SITUATED IN BUSINESS-ORIENTED PRACTICE

5.2.2.1 LEARNING ABOUT ONE'S JOB

One of the learning activities situated in business-oriented practice is *learning about one's job*. This learning activity focuses on ascertaining what is involved in one's job and the best ways of undertaking the work.

This pattern of learning was clearly addressed by a project coordinator in the Learning & Participation Department (LP Department). As she explained, she first started as an education officer in the LP Department, dealing with basic administrative work such as answering day-to-day inquiries, doing invoices and finance, etc. Over the past two years, she claimed that her role had developed and her job title had changed to the Learning & Participation Coordinator. In the current role, not only has she got more responsibility, but she is also needed to take overall responsibility for some projects carried out by her department. As she indicated, for this new role, she needs to know 'who is doing what' and 'whom to turn to for certain needs' because she frequently requires such information in order to feed back to the senior managers to help them make decisions. She stated:

'Sometimes I have to approach people to get information from them, when, in my view, they should have given that information to me already. I don't

know if that's because I am nosy. I think it's just a case of what you need to know...Because I am the one with a lot of information, I am often approached by my line manager when he is making decisions on something ... because I hold a lot of information.'

However, when she first started the job, she found it difficult to know what others were doing. One of the reasons for this was that most officers in her department did not often work in the office because they needed to deliver educational projects in schools and local communities. Thus, people did not see each other very often. I observed during the day I interviewed the Project Coordinator in her open-plan office that she was the only one in that day. The respondent pointed out that this was a typical day in her department. She claimed that even if people came in, they were not used to sharing information or to updating each other about their work. Because the department 'supports an autonomous culture rather than a team culture', 'it's very hard to get everybody together in the same room', commented another learning officer. People do not necessarily know what has been going on around them and who is responding to what. One interviewee stated, this situation arises '...not because these people don't get along, but because they all keep to a track where they are encouraged to be blinkered rather than seeing how they link up with each other.'

For the above reason, the Learning & Participation Coordinator stated that she had not been clear about what she was responsible for and where to look for information when she first started the job. She explained:

‘It was difficult because most of the people who work here, I mean you see it today, I am the only one who is in here. Pretty much everybody works autonomously; they work on their own. They go out and deliver their projects on their own. It’s quite difficult when you start here to figure out exactly what everybody else is doing because people are either not here or if they are here, they sort themselves out. They don’t necessary tell you what’s happening. So it’s quite difficult to know exactly. It was quite difficult when I first started to know who did what and what I was responsible for, to be honest.’

The above interview quote implies that information about what to do on the job was not immediately available in the workplace of Rainbow, not for the learning and participation coordinator at least. It was also difficult for her to obtain such information through her colleagues who shared the same office with her. This is because neither her department seemed to have the habit of sharing information between colleagues nor

had the opportunities to share information due to the rather individual-based nature of their work practices.

Initially, she had expected information to be given to her by the company. However, she then realised that she needed to go out and look for the information in the course of her job. However, she also found that knowing where and how to look for such information was a considerable challenge on the job because the opportunity was not created for her. She explained:

‘It was a big challenge when I first started. I was just trying to figure out exactly where everybody was and what everybody was doing. There was no opportunity to share that information.’

Another point emphasised was that knowing what information to get and how to get it was part of the on-the-job learning experience:

‘When I started, I kind of expected the information should be given and didn’t expect I should have to go out and get it. I don’t know if it’s a failing on the company’s part or failing on my part. But once you understand that, it’s quite easy to get the information you need. You just need to know how to get it and what information to get, which takes a long time. I

don't think you can teach somebody in the induction.

It's something you've got to learn on the job.'

As she indicated, it was not easy to grasp those things such as finding which person to talk to for what reason simply by knowing people's job titles or reading the Staff Handbook.

'It's very difficult to tell from somebody's job title.

Not what it is they do, but what you might need to approach them for... It's not something you can easily grasp'.

She highlighted the time it took for her to learn the approach through trial and error. She stated:

'It took a while ... just through trial and error really.

You just learn as you go along about who is the best person to speak to about what. ... It takes a lot of ringing the wrong person and being redirected. ...

That did take a long time..'

It was also pointed out that she found some short-cuts in terms of learning how to obtain information because 'there is usually somebody around who knows who to speak to'. Some people seemed to know better than others what was going on in the company and were good at directing people to the relevant information. She commented:

‘The job titles do give it a way to an extent... But I found, when I started, the best person to speak to would be somebody with an assistant after them. Because they usually were my counterparts, they sort of knew what was going on in their department. So if they didn’t have the answer, they would be able to tell you who might have. Or you could just go through the stage door (reception).... they are very good at telling you who you need to speak to...’

However, she also emphasised that the process of finding a short cut in itself was part of the learning experience on the job because it was not something that could be easily passed on to someone. The respondent stated that she had been trying to prepare a document to describe the way in which she handled the job to pass on some of her experience to a new team member. However, she found it very difficult to explain in detail to others how she worked. The respondent explained:

‘I’ve been trying to put together a document about everything that I do ...I found that really difficult because it’s so difficult to explain partly because most things I do, I do my own way. it’s really difficult to explain those details... so it’s much easier to speak in broad and general terms and let the people figure out the smaller stuff for themselves.’

As she emphasised, it was easy to talk to others about her general experience; but it was necessary for individuals to work out the details for themselves while doing the job. She stated:

‘It’s not really something you can tell somebody on their first day. Some things people need to figure out for themselves. All you can say to people really is that you need to keep on the ball, you need to know and you need to go out and find the information. You can’t expect it to be handed to you. I think that’s something you need to learn while doing the job.’

Another example of the concerned learning activity was given by a marketing officer. This person was brought in to assist with work in the Marketing Department on a short-term basis. As this officer reported, he neither had experience working in a theatre organisation nor had a particular background in the field of marketing. He said it was through a ‘big learning curve’ on the job that he began to grasp the context of the work and became competent at what he was asked to do. As he indicated, his line manager (Head of Marketing) played an important role in supporting his learning experience. The manager guided him through the process by explaining to him what was expected of him from a marketing perspective and helped him to set up short-term objectives on the job. As this marketing officer described:

‘I wasn’t sent on training courses because I was coming in to help. So it was on the job people were telling me new things. My line manager kept just giving me reports ... so nearly every day, he’d tell me three different things, what he’d expect from me, what he’d expect from the marketing of it. So almost like the learning objectives from what I should be taking from doing this bit of work.’

The interviewee stressed that he would otherwise have become lost without the support and guidance of his manager in terms of learning about his job. He commented:

‘He guided me like that ... and I’m thankful for that because otherwise, I would have been lost. I would have been pulling my hair out.’

Besides focusing on finding out what one’s job involves and ways of doing the job, *learning about one’s job* also involves developing one’s role on the job by having the freedom and support to try out different strategies. For example, the Programming Coordinator explained that she learned to develop her role and her own style of working as a consequence of having been given a considerable amount of freedom and support from her line manager, the Executive Director. She emphasised that she had been ‘learning all the time’ and that *‘her role*

had developed’ due to the autonomy and necessary guidance given to her when she wanted to experiment with different strategies for herself.

She explained:

‘I am learning new things every day ... I am very lucky. I am given the right amount of support and encouragement, and also space as well to actually go and work on projects on my own and to be able to develop my own style. I think there is a balance of knowing that if I get stuck or if I need information, I’ve got that support; but also allowing me the freedom actually to be able to express myself as well ... and bring my strengths as well.’

She emphasised particularly that she felt ‘very lucky’ because she had come to ‘be mentored by the Executive Director’ at the Rainbow and he had given her the space to learn, as described above. She also highlighted that both her line manager and the other key personnel with whom she worked were very good at passing on their knowledge and experience, which were invaluable to her own learning experience. She noted:

‘I feel really privileged to work with them because they know so much and they are good at sharing

information. That's great. I am learning from them every day.'

Similar learning experiences were also cited by the Head of Marketing. He indicated that he had learned to do his job by being trusted and supported by his line manager to be able to work autonomously on the job. He explained:

'I can function very autonomously, very confidently ... but what is essential to that is that I have someone to report to whom I trust and respect. She gives me the opportunity to do and freedom to deliver what I need to do and supports my opinions and ideas. She gives me ideas and points out when I am wrong.'

He placed particular emphasis on the fact that he was 'encouraged to learn things all the time' by his line manager, who often checked on his learning needs and passed on the relevant information of interest. He stated:

'She will always ask me, "is there any course you want to go on?" I am also advised to attend lots of different meetings – some meetings I don't necessarily have to be at. But I was invited to meetings so that I could perhaps pick something up. ... I am asked to do my appraisals, particularly on things such as, "What

have you learned?’... My managers always send me emails of things that I might not have seen from my team as well.’

He emphasised the following point: ‘It’s always been noted and encouraged if I express a wish to learn more’.

5.2.2.2 LEARNING ABOUT THE COMPANY AND HOW THINGS WORK IN A DIFFERENT PART OF THE COMPANY

Learning about the company and how things work in a different part of the company is another learning activity associated with business-oriented practice. This learning activity focuses on obtaining an overview of the company in the sense of knowing ‘what is going on’, ‘what is involved in other people’s jobs’ and ‘how things generally are done in different parts of the organisation’, so that the learner can better understand his/her own role in relation to the broader context. Taking the role of Programme Coordinator as an example, the job is to assist with the work between production-oriented practice and business-oriented practice. A significant part of the role is to set budgets for the Marketing Department although the coordinator has no particular responsibility for becoming involved in actual marketing practice. Nevertheless, it is still necessary for the Programme Coordinator to learn generally about the practice involved in the Marketing Department

in order to fulfill the role, otherwise it would be impossible to know how to allocate an appropriate budget.

For this reason, the current Programme Coordinator has been learning about other peoples' practices generally in order to provide the right support. She stated:

'I need to know the basics because I put a budget together for them. I need to know what's been set in the budget and how the marketing team needs to spend that money, and what they need to spend the money on... I need to know all that and to understand all that and then to be able to support that. It's kind of mutual understanding...'

She considered such learning as an essential part of her working life in the organisation. In her words:

'I think for an organisation to be able to work, you need to know and appreciate what people are doing, and what pressures they are under, and know their deadlines.'

Her point above was in fact related to a common concern revealed in a staff review process that took place approximately one year ago. The review process lasted for around nine months, during which time the

Executive Director and the General Manager of the company, together with two members of the Trade Union Committee, visited each department of the Rainbow Theatre, spending roughly one afternoon with all members of staff in the department to obtain their opinions and feedback. The review process mainly focused on aspects of the company such as employees' views about the way in which their respective departments operated, their feelings about their position in the structure, and whether they considered the theatre to be a good or bad company to work for.

One of the issues emerging from the review was that a significant number of staff expressed a wish to learn more about other parts of the organisation because they felt that the company was, to some extent, compartmentalised. If the situation was to continue, there would be the risk of employees working in isolation. One of the administrative officers highlighted this issue by describing the difficulty she found understanding the functions of other people in the company:

‘Because I am back here when everybody else is on the other side of the building, it’s quite difficult to get a hand on what everybody is doing back there’.

Similarly, the Executive Director stated that there was ‘quite a hunger for individuals or departments to learn more about other individuals and other departments’. It was pointed out by other interviewees that the

risk of avoiding such learning might become an obstacle to building up mutual understanding across different parts of the organisation. As one of the respondents stated:

‘That’s the hardest thing for any organisation. It’s a huge problem for any organisation: one part doesn’t understand what the other part is doing; why they exist; what they are doing or how their work is as vital as that individual’s work.’

Similarly, another interviewee emphasised the importance implied in such learning:

‘Because we did so much work that isn’t based in this building, I think a lot of people might think, “Oh, what it is that they are doing?” So, it’s good for us to communicate with everybody else and to get information from other people.’

In order to address the learning concern identified in the review process, it was informally agreed among many members of the organisation that if any individual in the organisation wanted to shadow someone else in a different department for a short period, they would be welcomed to do that. As the following interviewee stressed, shadowing was done purely on a voluntary basis and was a suggestion commonly welcomed among the members of the company:

‘What came out of that (the review outcome) was that everybody agreed to have people shadowing them for a day. So if I want to go down to our wardrobe department for a day saying, “Can I come to sit with you for a day?” they will be fine with that and everybody knows that’s ok. You can do that and your line manager will be ok with that. So in terms of learning about each other’s jobs within the organisation, I think it’s really good. That particularly came out of the staff review.’

Meanwhile, as the following respondent indicated, because it was a voluntary learning opportunity, this meant that it was not presumed. Hence, individuals were ‘expected to approach people’ to seek the opportunity rather than waiting to be approached. In other words, individuals needed themselves to take the initiative to make the connections in order to learn what they wanted to learn. The respondent commented:

‘...everybody has been told you’re completely welcome to do it. Everyone will be supported in doing that... You just need to make those connections and sort it out yourself... So if I want to spend a day in the lighting department, I’ll just talk to the Head of Lighting and get on with it. There’s no set structure in

place, but everybody is invited to do it if they want to do it.’

In the following paragraphs, I report an example of the learning activity under scrutiny taking place through shadowing opportunities. During one of my field visits, I had an opportunity to observe the Learning Participation Coordinator (in the LP Department) shadowing the Learning Project Manager (also in the LP Department) giving a backstage tour to a group of junior students from a local school.

A backstage tour is one of the services that the Rainbow Theatre provides to the public in order to engage existing audiences as well as attract new ones. This service is usually organised by the Learning Project Manager in the LP Department. However, at the time of this study, the Learning and Participation Coordinator was also interested in doing some tours and wanted to learn from the Learning Project Manager, who was very experienced and good at leading backstage tours. As the coordinator indicated, she had never led such a tour before and had little idea about how to show a group of youths around a busy theatre. For this reason, she took the opportunity of shadowing her colleagues while she was leading a backstage tour.

Interestingly, during the tour, I observed no obvious ‘teaching’ from the experienced officer to the Learning & Participation Coordinator. For

most of the time, the learning coordinator simply stayed among the student group, watching and listening to the progress of the tour during the day. She did not ask her colleague any questions about how to lead such a tour during the shadowing; neither did the experienced officer 'teach' the less experienced officer how to do it. The Learning Project Manager simply did her job (leading the backstage tour) as if we were all visitors to the Rainbow Theatre. Apart from helping her colleagues with things such as counting the number of students, and opening doors for them on a few occasions, the coordinator rarely interacted with her experienced colleague during the tour.

In my interview with the coordinator after the shadowing, she told me that she had learnt a great deal from observing how her colleague handled the job. She indicated that shadowing and observing how other people handle their work was a useful way to learn about others' roles. She stated:

'I've learned a lot from her about how to deal with a large group of children... It's something I've never had to do before.'

As the interviewee addressed further, having the opportunity of shadowing other people in the organisation is beneficial because people can understand what is involved in other jobs. Moreover, shadowing encourages communication among employees. As the respondent noted:

‘It’s very valuable. It’s the only way that other people realise what’s involved in other jobs... People do talk to each other a lot and they do try and find out what’s going on around the building.’

So far, I have illustrated learning activities associated with production-oriented practice and business-oriented practice. In the next Section, I describe the findings relating to management’s interest in learning and its intervention in learning activities.

5.3 MANAGEMENT INTERESTS IN LEARNING AND LEARNING INITIATIVES

One of the management interests in learning is mainly seen in its efforts to provide a vision for the company’s identities in terms of *who they are* and *what they want to be*. This learning interest was initiated by the current marketing manager, who made the senior management team aware of some managerial issues within the company at the time he joined the organisation. He pointed out the lack of a clear vision within the organisation in terms of guiding people to identify with the company. As he indicated, many people in the organisation tended to think of themselves in terms of parts of the organisation rather than in terms of the organisation as a whole.

In order to pick up on that matter, at macro level, the marketing manager first proposed to Rainbow's Board the idea of drafting a document about the brand of the company. The purpose of this was to give people a vision about their organisation on important issues such as the company's past achievements, current achievements and future achievements. After being approved by the Board, the marketing manager presented his idea to other managers and staff in different departments in order for them to contribute to the initiative from their perspectives. Based on the feedback from different parts of the company and the resulting market research he conducted for the company, he produced the initial version of the company's branding document.

Another marketing officer described how useful it was for her to know the broader vision of the company in the following accounts. As she explained, part of her role was to look after the diversity plan of the production programme of the company; seeing the bigger picture of the company helped her to understand how to link her work back to organisational goals. She described this benefit in the following way:

'It's really useful for me to have an understanding of how the organisation works strategically and how I can fit into that. So that kind of learning about management has been really useful in that sense... because I'm kind of involved in ensuring that the building, understanding how the systems work in

terms of planning, how an organisation plans ...how objectives and actions need to tie into organisational goals ...All that kind of stuff is relevant to coordinating the diversity plan... it needs to be dealt with in terms of how it relates back to organisational goals, and that understanding is quite important for me.'

At the micro level, the marketing manager also made an effort to encourage people to think of the company as a whole by helping them to identify common interests and needs. For example, he noticed that both the marketing team in his department and the sales team in the box office had a common interest in enhancing customer relations management. So he worked together with the manager of the sales team, pairing up people from both teams to focus on issues of membership schemes and fund raising through information sharing and collaboration.

The people involved appreciated that they were encouraged to learn to develop their roles as their work developed and were able to work more collaboratively with other parts of the company. As the marketing manager stated:

'They haven't chosen to or weren't guided together (before) ... But it has changed a lot since I got here. I

think they appreciate that their job has been more enriched. It's enriching for them to work because they are learning from their colleagues and are more of a team. They are not working in silence any more; they are sharing.'

Another management interest in learning was seen within the Marketing Department, where the marketing manager was concerned to improve teamwork through more information sharing among members. He identified that 'working in isolation used to be a massive issue for the team', where they were not very used to sharing their work information. He thought one cause of this problem might be that no one seemed to be interested in making work plans to organise their priorities or sharing them, even if they had one in mind:

'No one in my team does have a work plan. That doesn't exist at all ...They all know what they are doing in their heads. But no one is sharing what their priorities are'.

The marketing manager pointed that a consequence of not sharing information was the inability of staff to see the connections among the different work roles, which would impede potential collaboration:

'But it's isolating to be in a department when you are really busy or you are really stressed with a lot of

work, but you can't really share with your team. No one knows that you are that busy. No one can help you.'

To intervene in this situation, he initially asked everyone in the team to produce a work plan and hand it in to him on a regular basis so that they could discuss their work plans in team meetings. He showed the team one of the formats he used in his previous work and suggested the team followed it. However, as the manager described, he would never forget their reaction when he introduced this plan because the team members were 'completely shocked' and started to panic about what they were being asked to do. He recalled:

'I remember all their faces, It was sort of "Oh My God. What you are asking us to do? I can't do that."
They were panicking. They were completely shocked.'

The manager indicated that it was not a straight forward process for him to introduce the above change because he noticed that many people were struggling to comply with his rather imposing initiative and were not necessarily regarding his suggestion as useful.

It took the manager a while to realise that he had taken little note of various needs of the individuals and their different ways of working in the context of an arts organisation. As the manager explained, he had previously come from a corporate organisational background where

using work plans was very common to everyone. So initially, he thought it would also be important to implement that habit in his new team at Rainbow. Ultimately, this initiative became a learning curve for the manager as he began to realise the need for him to change his management approach first before he could make any changes to his team members. As he described:

‘They struggled to do it for me. Some of them managed and some of them didn’t. In the end, it was a learning curve for me. I thought, actually, why am I asking them all and forcing them to comply with one format that I’ve chosen. Actually, it’s better for them to have a work plan that works for them. ... So I said to them, “produce something that makes sense to you”.’

As he began to learn more about his new working environment and peoples’ needs, he felt that he was able to gain people’s trust and influence the team’s behaviour. In his words:

‘I feel that people trust me now... It took me nine months to get there and nine months of delivery ... You just need to understand personalities; understand what makes people ... Understand how to change my tone. Just one wrong word from me as a new senior

manager could de-motivate someone very easily It took a long time to get there.’

Meanwhile, the manager also learned that it was important to be aware of the matter of ‘sensible ownership’. This means that instead of forcing his team to hand in a document that mattered to him, it was better to encourage them to make work plans in whatever formats made sense to them. He referred to this learning outcome as ‘document irrelevance’. As he explained:

‘I rely on them to tell me what's important and what their priorities are ... Their thinking isn't about updating the document and making the document beautiful to hand to me; their thinking is about making sure their work contained in the document is delivered...and suddenly we are delivering this piece of work that everyone cares about.’

By allowing space for his team members to make their own choices, he noticed that everyone gradually started to use work plans, which made it easier for them to share work information with each other. The manager stated:

‘They’ve all got work plans and it's easy to share information then... and cross-team working is happening in that way.’

One of the marketing officers pointed out that the team became better at integrating with each other and was more able to work as a team by supporting each other. The respondent commented:

‘We're pretty much sort of left to get on with how we feel best we should do the job...We've got to that stage after having been in the job for a certain period of time and learned what is left to do. And so after giving us space to do the learning, we've then soon become an integral part of the cycle... and people within the team will always say, "I need help with this," and they'll know who's the expert to go to. We'll always have somebody to go to all day long.’

Not only did the marketing officers begin to identify links among each other's work, they were also able to reach out to other parts of the company for broader common interests. For example, the marketing team became involved with people in the website design team and the press team to look at ways of strengthening Rainbow's customer services from different perspectives.

In addition, the management interest in learning was seen to influence the overall management culture in the Rainbow Theatre. As the Executive Director described, one of the recruitment principles of the company was to:

‘...work on someone’s desire and hunger for learning’. ‘Trying to get a feel for how hungry they are to learn the job. Whether they have all the necessary and the relevant experience is not as important a thing for me’.

The Executive Director stated that he had been encouraging a culture where employees were stretched to learn by assigning them to tasks at a higher standard. As the respondent noted:

‘I am trying to encourage a culture where people are given the tasks that are slightly above their ability so that they have to stretch themselves to learn and to do things; and they are given the support to make that possible.’

Other interviewees also provided consistent views on the generally supportive management culture. As the Head of Marketing highlighted, the company had quite an open-minded and supportive management culture that provided space for people to learn and to explore:

‘You are encouraged to share and to have ideas, to try new things and ... [are] supported to try different approaches... The culture is really a good one here. That helps.’

Similarly, another interviewee indicated that the company had a strong culture of empowering its employees with freedom and autonomy. She commented:

‘People are given freedom to try things and to solve problems for themselves; the place is very, very strong in that sense.’

Another interviewee pointed out that although there was a hierarchy in the organisational structure, she felt a rather loose control from the top. People were left to their own devices to work and to find their ways of solving problems on the job. As a production manager commented:

‘It’s important to get them to solve their own problems and sometimes to make mistakes. Let them make mistakes. Let them do an over spend because that’s the only way they’ll learn. You’ve got to be allowed and given enough freedom to screw things up now and then. That’s how people improve.’

In the following interview accounts, two marketing officers commented on the generally supportive management culture in the Marketing Department and appreciated being given the space and support to learn new things in the course of their work. Moreover, they felt they were trusted in their work. As one of the officer stated:

‘I didn't have any expertise in the job ... I've just learned everything on the job. I've just learned everything just going along...And genuinely, yeah, people are supported and encouraged but kind of left to do their job...We're not kind of micromanaged really...and certainly in our department we're seen as the experts in what we do...’

Similarly, the other marketing officer described how she had developed herself on the job through learning. When she first started at the theatre, she was not very computer literate:

‘I pretty much had probably sent about three e-mails in my life and never really used the Internet.’

In contrast, now, using such technologies has become a focus in her work and she has become quite competent with that. As the respondent pointed out, doing everything new counted as a learning experience for her. The interviewee stated:

‘Everything new that we do is learning. I mean, not the stuffing of the envelopes and trying to get mail out. But any new thing that you do is a learning experience...and I'm still learning stuff after four years. The first time I did it, it was a complete baptism by fire, and I had no idea what I was doing. I was

really kind of clueless. So I'm a hell of a lot more clued up now, and I know what I'm doing a lot more, but I'm still learning stuff, particularly about the lecture schools and how they work and how the information ...'

The above interviewee pointed out that the company has 'a great learning environment' which she thinks has enabled her to develop her role on the job. She stated:

'In my experience, it's been a great learning environment... I started as a marketing assistant, so kind of ...the bottom of the ladder in the department and I've kind of been able to move up purely because of skills and knowledge and experience that I have had on the job ... and not specifically in formal training classes. But just, yeah, I've been able to develop my skills here and develop my knowledge and develop my interests as well.'

The above respondent also pointed out that the current management seemed to focus more on helping staff to learn even from the mistakes they made rather than to criticise people. In the respondent's view, the team has never been criticised by the line manager even when they have made mistakes:

‘When I’ve done stuff wrong – I know I’ve done wrong. I’ve still been supported for it ...I’ve never been told off for anything. It’s just support by making sure it doesn’t happen again. So yeah, we don’t make mistakes often but when we do, we focus on learning from them rather than being told off for them. So it’s a very supportive environment...’

Another learning officer also agreed with the above point by mentioning the following case. The team was once placed in a very difficult situation that would potentially lead to a serious issue for the company. However, the team was not left alone to deal with the problem. Instead, a number of senior managers got involved and supported the team by taking the responsibility upon themselves. As the respondent described:

‘I had a bit of a run-in with a teacher not so long ago... And it was potentially quite a serious issue...But both my line manager and his line manager and the head of learning... all kind of supported all the people involved, took the responsibility on themselves. They dealt with the problem. They didn’t leave it up to us to deal with the problem.’

5.4 A SUMMARY

To summarise, this chapter has first described the learning activities involved in the Rainbow Theatre under two broad categories: learning activities situated in production-oriented practice and business-oriented practice. The learning activities are summarised in Table 5.1 as follows.

This chapter has also reported findings on some management interests in learning and the intervention taken in respect of learning in the context of these interests. These management interests and intervention as well as learning activities that were affected are highlighted in Table 5.2.

TABLE 5.1 SUMMARY OF LEARNING ACTIVITIES IDENTIFIED IN THE CASE OF RAINBOW

Learning activities situated in production-oriented practice

- a. Learning to become a practitioner
- b. Learning to solve problems as quickly as they emerge
- c. Learning from the experiences of others
- d. Learning to deal with unfamiliar tasks on the job
- e. Learning to work as part of a team

Learning activities situated in business-oriented practice

- a. Learning about one's job
- b. Learning about the company and what is involved in a different part of the company

TABLE 5.2 A SUMMARY OF MANAGEMENT INTERESTS IN LEARNING AND LEARNING INITIATIVES IN THE RAINBOW THEATRE

Management interests in learning	Learning initiatives
a. To provide a broad vision for the organisation's identity	Articulating the company's brand
b. To influence people to think of the organisation as a whole rather than seeing it in parts	Helping people to identify common interests across different departments/teams
c. To influence organisational culture that stretches and supports people to learn	Allowing the freedom, space and trust for people to try out things even by making mistakes Giving supports and guidance when such initial imports are needed

CHAPTER 6: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous two chapters have described the specific learning activities involved in the two case companies under study. In this chapter, an analytical framework that emerged from the empirical findings is developed and then discussed in relation to the literature reviewed. This analytical framework seeks to explain how situated learning arises in the organisational context under investigation as well as how the issue of power influences the organisational dynamics of learning. This analytical framework is developed based on the following three theoretical points.

The empirical findings of this study first suggest that the identified learning activities in each of the case companies under examination are made possible through the presence of one of the following driving forces: ‘work needs’ and ‘opportunities for engagement in work practices’. I use the term ‘work needs’ to refer to the minimum yet necessary level of demands for organisation employees’ participation in a particular kind of work practice in a given context of an organisation. In this respect, the researcher regards work needs as the strands that weave together to create a particular kind of work practice. In this study, I describe work needs metaphorically as the ‘textures’ of a given kind of

work practice. Here, I mean the interwoven strands that create a particular kind of work practice and shape the nature of that kind of work practice. Based on Gherardi's (2000) understanding of 'practice' as a system of activities in which knowing is not separate from doing, I use the term 'work practice' to refer to a system of work activities in which knowing is not separate from doing in the context of a given work organisation.

With respect to the term 'opportunities for engagement in work practices', I use this term to refer to the embedded or emerging opportunities that provide conditions for participation in a particular kind of work practice in a given context of an organisation. In this respect, the researcher regards 'opportunities for engagement in work practices' as the structuring elements of a particular kind of work practice that is shaped by the ways in which that work practice is organised in the context of a given organisation.

In this study, I use the term 'needs-driven' learning to describe the learning activities that arise through work needs in each of the case companies under examination. Accordingly, I use the term 'opportunities-driven' learning to describe the learning activities arising through opportunities for engagement in work practices in each of the case companies under examination.

Second, the empirical findings of this study also suggest that managerial intervention does not drive learning activities directly, but has a double-

edged impact, being both constraining and encouraging, on the circumstances through which learning can be driven by work needs and opportunities for engagement in work practices. As the constraining effects on learning possibilities, management intervention can create conflicting interests and tension that overshadow work needs from a local practice point of view. In addition, these conflicting interests and tension inhibit people's participation in their day-to-day local practice through which the needs-driven learning is mostly experienced or may possibly arise.

As the encouraging effects on learning possibilities, management intervention can serve to extend the access to existing opportunities for engagement in work practices to the wider group of participants in the organisation. In addition, it serves to create new opportunities for engagement in work practices that provide the condition for potential opportunities-driven learning to arise.

By recognising the double-edged effects of management intervention, the present study introduces more critical ideas to the current debate on power in the OL literature. As reviewed in Chapter 2, the current debate tends to show a rather negative connotation of power by emphasising the controlling and potentially coercive aspects of management causal powers (e.g. Coopey, 1995, 1998; Easterby-Smith, 1997, Driver, 2002) or by stressing the struggles or tensions associated with managerial interference (e.g. Vince, 2001; Raz & Fadlon, 2005; Hong & Fiona,

2009). It is also argued in the early literature that the operation of such power can influence the process through which people become committed to an enterprise and to those through whom they learn. As some scholars indicate, such a negative effect of power can be achieved either by utilising the considerable advantage of corporate managers over other stakeholders in the organisation in terms of determining which interests should be served by an organisation (e.g. Coopey, 1998;), or by causing problems such as emotions, politics and tensions (e.g. as seen in Vince, 2001; Raz & Fadlon, 2005; Hong & Fiona, 2009).

If power is deliberately defined as a neutral term, ‘a force that affects outcomes’, following Hardy’s definition (1996:s3), my study suggests that there are two kinds of power mobilised around the issue of learning in the two theatre cases under investigation – the power of management operated through the implementation of the initial managerial aspiration for learning, and the power of engaging. In my cases studies, the first type of power is exemplified through the attempt to implement and sustain various managerial initiatives (e.g. pursuing a learning organisation vision as seen in the Dream Case; rebranding the organisation’s identity and image; introducing new ways of working, etc. as seen in the Rainbow case). This type of power is similar to what Tsoukas (1994) refers to as the causal power of management that derives from the essential functions of management (including planning, organising, leading and controlling). However, the present study

suggests that the power of management (exemplified through the management intervention on learning as highlighted in the cases), is not necessarily a negative aspect as suggested in the relevant previous OL literature. Instead, the power of management can be argued to be a double-edged sword that has both an encouraging effect on some learning possibilities as well as a constraining effect on others.

The second type of power, the power of engaging refers to the forces that produce the outcome of situated learning identified in is exemplified by the circumstances through which situated learning is derived from the local process of engaging in practice on a day-to-day basis and is driven by ‘working needs’ and ‘opportunities for engagement in practice’. Because the two types of learning drives are tightly bound to the specific context of a concerned practice(s) from the practitioner’s point of view, the power of engaging operated through the learning drives is, by nature, also situated. This means that such power emerges spontaneously as part of the very process of engaging in local practice rather than as a result of being imposed by a top-down management approach. In this respect, the power of engaging does not solely differ from the legitimised power of management derived from the formal structures of organisation design (the first type of power); it also works against the legitimised power of management. This happens particularly when conflicts of interests and tension arise as a result of

management intervention that seeks to generalise and control learning strategically as highlighted in my case studies.

Thirdly, this study further suggests that none of the co-existent kinds of power can wield a dominant influence on each other. Thus, the power relations between them are not that of control and being controlled, or of domination and oppression, but rather of a complex interplay in dynamic balance. This power interplay associated with learning is mobilised around three organisational dimensions, namely the demands for participation (represented through working needs), the supplies of condition for participation (opportunities for engagement in practice) and management intervention. Such power interplay mobilised through these organisational dimensions represents the organisational dynamics of learning in the cases under investigation.

The remainder of this chapter will elaborate on the above insights in detail. The structure of the rest of this chapter is as follows: Section 6.2 explores work needs as one type of driving force of learning; Section 6.3 explores opportunities for engagement in work practices as another type of driving force of learning; Section 6.4 focuses on analysing and discussing the double-edged impact of managerial intervention on learning and the power struggle surrounding learning; Section 6.5 brings together the theoretical insights discussed by drawing attention to a framework of the organisational dynamics of learning emerging from the study.

6.2 WORK NEEDS AS A TYPE OF DRIVING FORCE FOR SITUATED LEARNING

Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 have offered detailed descriptions of the learning activities involved in the work practices in the context of each given theatre producing organisation under examination. The descriptive analysis of those two chapters shows that each of the identified learning activities not only is situated in the local process of undertaking a particular kind of work practice, but also is integrated into that work practice in the context of a given theatre producing organisation. Further thematic analysis of the situations where each learning activity arises is conducted through the raising of probing questions such as ‘What is the thing that connects each of the identified learning activities with a particular work practice?’ ‘What is this ‘thing’ in nature and what is the relationship between this ‘thing’ and that particular work practice?’ By addressing such questions, the study identifies that it is the minimum yet necessary level of demands for organisation employees’ participation in a particular kind of work practice that connect some of the learning activities with work practices and drive these learning activities in the context of each given organisation under examination. In this study, I term this driving force of learning work needs. This refers to the minimum yet necessary level of demands for organisation employees’ participation in a particular kind of work practice in the context of a given work organisation. In this respect, work needs, in essence, are the

strands that weave together to create a particular work practice. In the study, I describe work needs metaphorically as the ‘textures’ of a given kind of work practice, by which I mean the interwoven strands that create a particular kind of work practice. In this respect, work needs shape the nature of a work practice and are inevitably reshaped by the nature of that work practice. Based on the work of Gherardi (2000), who regards ‘a practice’ as a system of activities in which knowing is not separate from doing, I use the term ‘work practice’ to refer to a system of work activities in which knowing is not separate from doing in the context of a given work organisation. By the term ‘nature of a work practice’, I refer to the unique qualities of a work practice that distinguish it from other types of work practices (e.g. production-oriented practice versus business-oriented practice).

In this study, the notion of work needs is a context-dependent concept; what comprises work needs depends on the particular work practice focused upon.

It is necessary to emphasise that I use the notion of ‘work needs’ in a narrow sense to highlight the ‘essential needs’ for accomplishing particular practices to meet job demands (e.g. accomplishment of a particular theatre production-making task and performances). The notion ‘work needs’ links quite directly to the notion of ‘social accomplishment’ addressed in Orlikowski’s study (2002). He emphasises the essential role of human action in knowing how to get

things done in complex organisational work. My concept of ‘work needs’ is not the same as that depicted in motivation theory (i.e. the needs/motivations/ideals of employees); e.g. the hierarchies of ‘human needs’ conceptualised in Maslow (1970: 35--47), whose notion of needs refers to ‘physiological needs’, ‘safety needs for belongingness’ or ‘love needs’, ‘esteem needs’, and ‘the need for self-actualisation’.

The remainder of this section is divided into three sub-sections: Section 6.2.1 analyses the needs-driven learning activities identified in the case of Dream, and establishes what comprise the work needs for these learning activities. Section 6.2.2 analyses the needs-driven learning activities identified in the case of Rainbow and establishes what comprise the work needs for these learning activities. The reason for presenting the patterns of needs-driven learning separately for each case lies in the rationale of illustrating learning activities without taking them out of the context in which they are embedded. This rationale is consistent with the broader research aim of the present study to explore learning as situated activities. In these sub-sections, the present study’s findings on the patterns of needs-driven learning are compared and contrasted with the relevant learning patterns in the reviewed OL literature. Section 6.2.3 discusses the significance of recognising work needs as a type of driving force of learning in relation to the relevant previous studies in the OL literature.

6.2.1 NEEDS-DRIVEN LEARNING IN THE CASE OF DREAM

The needs-driven learning activities identified in the case of Dream are: learning to exist in different teams; learning the process of production making; learning to solve problems quickly as they emerge; learning to let things go; learning about the company and how things work in a different part of the organisation; learning to deal with unusual roles on the job; and learning about one's role. These needs-driven learning activities are listed below in Table 6.1. in the left-hand column. The right-hand column of Table 6.1 indicates the work needs driving those learning activities listed in the left-hand column of Table 6.1.

As shown in Table 6.1, the needs-driven learning activities situated in the local process of undertaking production-oriented practice are listed separately from those situated in the local process of undertaking business-oriented practice. This is because there are different sets of work needs and the corresponding needs-driven learning activities in production-oriented practice and in business-oriented practice. Each of the needs-driven learning activities listed in Table 6.1 is analysed with illustrative examples in the following paragraphs.

Table 6.1 Needs-driven learning in the case of Dream

Needs-driven learning situated in the local process of undertaking production-oriented practice	Work needs driving the learning activities (in the left-hand column) in production-oriented practice
a. Learning to exist in different teams	a. The need to work collaboratively in a collective practice where

	memberships are constantly changing over different productions
b. Learning the process of production making	b. The need to anticipate the process of production making
c. Learning to solve problems quickly as they emerge	c. The need to minimise the risk of causing distractions to the process of production making;
d. Learning to let things go	d. The need to pursue the creative nature of the arts
Needs-driven learning situated in the local process of undertaking business-oriented practice	Work needs driving the learning activities (in the left-hand column) in business-oriented practice
e. Learning about the company and how things work in a different part of the organisation	e. The need to gain mutual understanding of each other's work and to relate one's role to the broader context of the company
f. Learning to deal with unusual roles on the job	f. The need to adapt to the emerging situations on the job
g. Learning about one's role	g. The need to understand what is involved in one's job and to seek appropriate ways of handling the job

With respect to learning activities situated in production-oriented practice, the work needs that drive learning can be summarised as shown in Table 6.1 (right-hand column): the need to work collaboratively in a collective practice where memberships are constantly changing over different productions; the need to anticipate the progress of production making; the need to minimise the risk of causing distractions to the process of production making; and the need to pursue the creative nature of the arts.

The learning activity *learning to exist in different teams*, (a) as listed in Table 6.1, is strongly driven by the work need to work collaboratively in a collective practice where membership is constantly changing over different productions. As indicated in Chapter 4, Section 4.1.2, the process of production making is a collective practice that requires across-team collaborations among different production-supporting teams. Because the groups involved in such collective practice change from production to production due to the nature of theatre-making work, it is necessary for the people involved in this collective practice to learn how to moderate behaviour styles and actions in response to other members. This is illustrated in the interview quotation provided in Chapter 4 (Section 4.2.1.1):

‘Everything we do is different. Every time, you start a new project. It’s not even starting in a new year ... There is a new working relationship to be formed with directors, designers and actors. It’s different teams of

people who are engaged in it ... different groups of people who form themselves into a different structure to do this show and then suddenly there is somebody else to adapt to, to do another show...’

The memberships and participation of the collective practice of production making seem to be temporary in nature, being maintained mainly for the life span of a certain production-making period, and then disbanded and replaced by a new set of members and participants. As mentioned previously, these short-term teams are regarded as ‘temporary systems’ because they typically are disbanded after each production, with a new team assembled for each subsequent production (Goodman and Goodman 1976). At the same time, as indicated in the background information about the case of Dream, the fact that the company runs a repertoire of production projects annually implies a brisk changing of members and participants in such collective practice. The learning pattern arising from this temporary and fast-changing set of relations among people and practice has been relatively under-addressed in previous study approaches to theorising learning patterns in the contexts of other organisations. For example, as reviewed in Chapter 2, the legitimate peripheral participation-based and community of practice-based theorising approaches pay more attention to the learning patterns that arise within a relatively stable and sustainable form of community. In these contexts, the membership of a community of practice and participation in that community is seen as an on-going

process and less attention is paid to the domain of practice where relationships among the participants change rapidly.

For example, the communities of apprenticeships' practices addressed in Lave and Wenger's study (1991) seem to be much more stable and sustainable in the sense that apprentices maintain their membership and participation in a community of practice either as newcomers or as relatively 'old-timers' (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Similarly, Wenger (1998) considers a community of practice as 'groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interaction **on an ongoing basis**' (p.4) (emphasis added).

As can be seen, the needs-driven learning activity (learning to exist in different teams) identified in the present study is not the same as those learning activities addressed in previous studies (e.g. Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) through the principal elements of legitimate peripheral participation and communities of practice.

Learning activity *learning the process of production making*, (b) in Table 6.1, is mainly driven by the need to anticipate progress of the overall process of production making. As indicated in Chapter 4 (Section 4.1.2), the procedures involved in the process of making a production are largely interlinked. As a consequence of the independence among the different input elements of the production process, there is the need to anticipate how well one element will be

completed by others in order to understand the best way to undertake one's own element. This is illustrated in the example described in Chapter 4 (Section 4.2.1.2); where learning the process of production making allowed the artisan in the workshop to predict the best time to start building sets for the rehearsal rooms.

Learning to problem-solve quickly, (c) in Table 6.1, relates to the working need to minimise the risk of creating distractions to the production-making process. Because theatre making is an exploratory process, there is always a level of uncertainty at any stage of that process. As noted in Chapter 4 (Section 4.2.1.3), in the theatre context, problems and difficulties often emerge unexpectedly in the process of production making, many of which cannot be attended to until a formal approach to discussing and resolving such issues has been established, due to the rather strict show performance deadlines. For this reason, those involved in production making are expected to learn to solve any problems, expected or unexpected, very quickly in order not to create bottlenecks in the overall process. As one of the stage operation staff described vividly, a stage operating crew needs to prepare itself like a 'coiled spring that waits for any situation that might arise'.

The work need related to the learning pattern, *learning to let things go*, (d) in Table 6.1, is to pursue the creative nature of the arts. As mentioned in Chapter 4 (Section 4.2.1.4), for a theatre production company, an important yet unwritten principle of making productions is

to avoid replication. This principle means that there are no fixed ways or set rules regarding how things should be done in the process of production making. Eradicating the old and looking for new and different ways of doing things is a common approach in the process of making productions, which applies even for the same production that has previously been put on. This is illustrated in the comment of a design worker for Dream, who stated that what he had learned most on the job was to ‘let things go’, especially when working with the current artistic director. It is pointless to remain entrenched in the past or in the ideas that do not work because of the creative nature of such a ‘business’.

As reviewed in Chapter 2, very few studies have explored situated learning directly in the context of theatre producing organisations. One exception is offered by Yanow (2001), who makes the link between the subject of organisation learning research and improvising activities in theatre settings. Yanow’s paper focuses on her participatory observation of a series of scene-based classes offered by the musical theatre of California in the U.S, where she not only observed how actors learn through improvisation activities, but also gained personal experience in such learning with the actors. As she states in her paper, learning through improvisation rests on sustained practice over time. Engagement is purposive because each actor has to work to establish an objective in his or her scene in the collective process of production

making. Yanow (2001) explained such learning experience by describing her own experience in the following way, 'I learned to know whom I could count on to interrupt me in order to take over a scene, or whom I could count on in a scripted scene for the emotional support necessary to carry the point home' (p.59).

Her analysis of the learning activities in the practice-based training classes in this different theatre context also implied that the learning concerned is driven by some kind of working need. Yanow's (2001) study offers an opportunity for OL researchers to see how improvising learning activities arise in a context that is identical to the rehearsal room – an area of practice that is less explored in the present study due to a number of issues relating to restricted research access. Nevertheless, Yanow's study seems to provide coherent evidence to support my view that work needs is one type of driving force of learning undertaken in some parts of the two theatres studied.

Turning to the learning activities associated with business-oriented practice, the varied work needs driving learning can be summarised as follows: the need to gain mutual understanding of each other's work and to learn more about one's role in relation to the broader context of the company; the need to adapt to emerging situations on the job, and the need to understand what is involved in one's job and to seek appropriate ways of handling the job. Below are some examples of the aforementioned work needs:

Learning about the company and how things work in a different part of the organisation, (e) in Table 6.1, is driven by the working need to gain mutual understanding of one another's work and to understand one's role in relation to the broader context of the company. As mentioned in Chapter 4 (Section 4.1.1), the organisation was considered to be somewhat fragmented. A common feeling expressed by a number of interviewees was that people working in different parts of the company did not necessarily understand the nature of each other's work. This issue led to a number of difficulties when people needed to work across each other's professions, especially when work involved inputs from both the production side and the business side of the company. As indicated earlier, because many people working in the 'office world' do not necessarily have a theatre-related background, there was an increasing need among participants in this study to know more about how to relate their roles to the broader picture of the theatre organisation. Thus, the above work need pushed the participants involved to learn about other activities in their organisation and how these activities were generally undertaken in different parts of the company.

The above-mentioned pattern of learning and its driving force draws similar attention to the issue of discovering information about other work practices and the underlying connection between one another's work practices as that highlighted in Wenger's (1998) notion of learning: 'evolving forms of mutual engagement – discovering how to engage ...

establishing who is who, who is good at what' and understanding what their enterprise is about. However, unlike Wenger's intent to theorise that the learning process occurs through communities where people share a strong sense of 'mutual understanding' and believe in 'contributing to a joint enterprise', I suggest that learning is not necessarily associated with communities characterised by 'mutual understanding and mutual engagement'. In fact, in the case of Dream, there was, in many instances, a lack of what Wenger (2000:229) describes as the 'collective developed understanding of what their community is about'. In contrast, it has been found that a considerable number of organisational members working on business-oriented practice do not necessarily understand theatre making. At the same time, there is a tendency to work in isolation within functional and logistical divisions of departments/groups, which leads to failure to foster a broader view among organisational members of their individual roles in relation to the organisation. This suggests that organisation members, irrespective of whether they are newcomers or old-timers, are not naturally equipped with the competency to know about their companies and the ways of doing involved.

As illustrated by the current evidence in the case of Dream, learning arises in such an organisation where the cohesive 'community of practice' argued by Wenger has not taken shape.

Learning to deal with unusual roles on the job, (f) in Table 6.1, is driven by the need to adapt to the emerging situations on the job. This needs-driven learning activity and the work need driving this learning are closely associated with a particular period in the organisation where strategic changes take place as a result of management initiatives. During this transitional period, new development projects (e.g. expanding and reorganising the existing workspace, building new office space) have been embarked on in the hope of achieving organisational efficiency and unity practically by addressing the issues of being a fragmented organisation. In practice, these strategic changes have merged into new levels of demands taking the shape of 'unusual roles' adding to some employees' 'day jobs'. For example, as described in Chapter 4 (Section 4.2.2.4), the technical director was faced with such emerging situations in his job and had to learn to deal with an unusual role in such a situation. This required him to become involved in a building construction project where he needed to work up to speed with a group of architects, and to adapt to their ways of operating and working. As the respondent expressed, he played a very different role from that with which he was familiar in 'his day job' in the context of making shows on stage.

This needs-driven learning activity adds important insights to the existing OL literature from situated learning perspectives, as it starts to draw out the link between learning pattern and managerial activities. This link seems to be potentially mediated by the increased demands of

a given job role. I will return to this point and discuss it further in Section 6.4.

The final learning activity listed in Table 6.1, *learning about one's role*, (g), is driven by the working need to understand what is involved in one's job as well as the need to seek appropriate ways of handling the job. This specific needs-driven learning activity has a different emphasis from the needs-driven learning activity – *learning to deal with unusual roles on the job* (e), as mentioned above. The former learning stresses its relation to the 'day job' of an employee, a domain of practice that is relatively established over a long period of time in the given organisation context; whereas the latter emphasises its relation to 'emerging situations' that increase the level of demands of a given job.

The former needs-driven learning activity is similar to one of the learning processes described by Wenger (1998), who stated that learning in practice is 'evolving forms of mutual engagement: discovering how to engage, what helps and what hinders' (p.95). An example of this needs-driven learning activity, provided in Chapter 4, Section 4.2.2.5, is found in the experience of an in-house lawyer who was learning how to provide legal support in the context of an arts organisation. Because this individual was appointed to a role that had only recently been established in Dream, no-one had been there formally to hand the job over to her. In addition, because the lawyer had no previous work experience of an arts organisation, she was compelled to learn the

practice from scratch, and to adapt to changes in the role as the job evolved.

Turning to the learning experiences of both producers in the case of Dream, they both mentioned that they were constantly learning about their roles like ‘little birds picking up things’. As indicated previously in Chapter 4 (Section 4.2.2.5), the producer’s role is multifaceted, due to the need to work across different parts of the organisation and interact with many different groups of people. Thus, their practice is largely discursive and evolves over the course of a project. For producers, there is no routine or structure to follow on the job and every day is distinct from the previous. In this respect, their learning is driven by the very need to understand what is involved in their job and to seek appropriate ways of handling the job as they go along.

Wenger’s study (1998) of claim processors also provides coherent evidence to support the specific learning drive addressed above. Wenger argues that learning is not a static subject matter, but the very process of being engaged in, and participating in developing, an ongoing practice. Supporting evidence noted by him is that the claim processors he studied all agreed that they were learning continually on the job. However, interestingly, they did not regard what they were doing as learning because what they learned was their practice. As Wenger (1998) explains, his findings indicate that learning is not reified as extraneous goals, but as the very process of engaging and participating in a practice.

In this respect, Wenger's study also suggests that learning is strongly connected with the demands of performing a practice.

6.2.2 NEEDS-DRIVEN LEARNING IN THE CASE OF RAINBOW

Needs-driven learning activities are also identified in the case of Rainbow, which are listed in Table 6.2 (left column). The right-hand column of Table 6.2 indicates the work needs associated with the listed learning activities. Again, the needs-driven learning activities and the work needs involved are grouped separately for the work area of production-oriented practice and business-oriented practice, for a similar reason mentioned earlier with respect to the case of Dream, i.e. each involves a different set of work needs.

Each needs-driven learning activity listed in Table 6.2 is analysed with illustrative examples and discussions of relevant literature. At this stage, important distinctions between similar needs-driven learning activities are also clarified where necessary.

Table 6.2 needs-driven learning activities in the case of Rainbow

Needs-driven learning situated in the local process of undertaking production-oriented practice	Work needs driving the learning activities (in left-hand column) in production-oriented practice
a. Learning to become a practitioner	a. The need to be competent to 'perform' work flawlessly in the eyes of an audience

b. Learning to solve problems quickly as they emerge	b. The need to minimise the risk of causing distractions to the overall process of production making
c. Learning to deal with unfamiliar tasks on the job	c. The need to adapt to the non-routine aspects of production making
d. Learning to work as part of the team	d. The need to work collaboratively towards the common goal of putting a show on stage
Needs-driven learning situated in the local process of undertaking business-oriented practice	Work needs driving the learning activities (left-hand column) in business-oriented practice
e. Learning about one's role	e. The need to understand what is involved in one's job and to seek appropriate ways of handling the job
f. Learning about the company and how things work in a different part of the company	f. The need to gain mutual understanding of each other's work and to relate one's role to the broader context of the company

The learning pattern, *learning to become a practitioner* (a), as listed in Table 6.2, is driven by the work need to be competent to 'perform' work

flawlessly in the eyes of an audience. This is because getting ‘hands-on experience’ is an essential element of that which lies at the heart of theatre making – the performance. As Broekhuijsen and Ibbotson (2006) argued, performance is ‘a process of co-creation between all the makers and the audience at a specific time and place’ and the professionals must ‘prepare themselves to be ready to perform adequately at the desired moment’ (p.102). This context specificity highlights the importance of participating in practice and the practicality of such participation in serving the production-making process, a joint enterprise, according to Etienne Wenger (1998). Moreover, this particular work need (the need to be competent) that drives learning activity (a) in Table 6.2 is also related to another context specificity indicated previously in Chapter 5 (Section 5.1.2), namely, that the input elements required in the process of production making are somewhat linked with each other. Therefore, being competent at producing one type of input element is an essential condition to prevent potential interruptions to other input elements in the production-making process.

In other words, for those responsible for production to be able to participate in and then contribute to the process of making a production, they need to learn to become a practitioner (Brown & Duguid, 1991). This finding echoes the view of learning propounded in the ‘social learning theory in organisational learning literature’, as reviewed by Elkjaer (2005). As Elkjaer (2005: 43) noted, ‘learning is a way of being

and becoming part of the social worlds that comprise an organisation, and in which the central issue of learning is to become a practitioner' (Brown and Ducuid 1991; Richter 1998). Elkjaer (2005) stated further that learning is a practical rather than epistemic accomplishment. This statement suggests that learning and knowledge is not something stored in books, brains and information systems (Cook and Brown, 1999; Gherardi et al., 1998) but 'becomes the active process of knowing – or getting to know – the way to participate and interact in organisations' (Elkjaer, 2005: 44). As these scholars point out, learning, to some extent, is connected to practical accomplishment of work practices. This provides theoretical support from the existing literature for my identification of the needs-driven learning activity, *learning to become a practitioner*.

Such connection is especially crucial in the context of theatre making because any 'incompetent behaviour' or 'non-practical element' in the production-making process could lead to the immediate consequence of distracting the overall process, or even spoiling the performance on stage. More importantly, the results of such a consequence are immediately seen.

As noted earlier, some interviewees stated that one general principle involved in production making is that 'you never stop a show' (unless there is a safety issue or implications for more serious issues). This means that people must find their own way to keep the process moving

on, especially when problems occur unexpectedly. As illustrated by the examples described in Chapter 5, Section 5.2.1.1 (e.g. stage operating staff learning to move a pirate ship, being able to walk in the dark without making mistakes, or costume makers making giant-sized floor clothes), learning to become a practitioner is driven by the need to become competent.

Despite previous studies having emphasised that becoming a practitioner is an important learning activity in a given organisation context, the present finding in this study identifies this activity as a needs-driven learning in the context of the theatre producing organisation under examination. This adds a new insight to the OL literature. This finding suggests that the nature of practice itself plays an important role in shaping this particular learning activity rather than the condition of community of practice (COP), as largely emphasised in the early literature. In the context of staging a theatre production, the practice involved is mainly exposed to the presence of audiences, who would expect the people who produce and operate that production to ‘perform’ their work flawlessly in order to present a satisfying piece of artistic work. Because the nature of production making requires people to ‘perform’ their practice in the practical sense, it is therefore a natural need for people involved in such a job to learn to become a practitioner. In this respect, this specific needs-driven learning activity may support the general conceptualisation that learning is an integral and inseparable

aspect of social practice (e.g. Lave and Wenger, 1990; Brown and Duguid, 1991; Nicolini *et al.*, 1996; Cook and Yanow, 1993; Nicolini and Meznar, 1995; Ghrardi and Nicolini, 2000, by showing how learning is actually integrated into practice. (Nicolini and Meznar 1995)

Learning to solve problems quickly as they emerge, (b) in Table 6.2, is driven by the need to minimise the risk of creating distractions to the overall process of production making, the same kind of working need as mentioned earlier in the case of Dream. This driven process is illustrated in the example cited in Chapter 5 (Section 5.2.1.4), describing how stage operating crew members attempted to fit the stage for a show when they incurred several problems with one piece of the main set. In addition, the ‘accident’ which happened backstage, as explained in the same section, provides a clear illustration of the need to learn to solve problems quickly.

With respect to *learning to deal with unfamiliar tasks on the job*, (c) in Table 6.2, participants were learning because they needed to adapt to the non-routine aspects of production making, the circumstances of which involved making items that they had never made before. As mentioned previously, the practice involved in the process of production making is context-specific, depending on the contents of a production script and complex transformation of such script into a performance. This is achieved through the adoption of certain theatrical methods by the creative team and other production-supporting crews to translate the

theatre production-making process into an exploratory and creative process. This means that no production-making experience is ever the same as the previous one. Thus, people involved in such practice sometimes find themselves facing tasks that they are not particularly experienced at. For example, as mentioned in the Chapter 5 (Section 5.2.1.4), departments that contribute directly to the production-making process (e.g. the Wardrobe Department, workshops, and the Wigs Department) are sometimes required to make special items of costumes and props of which they have no previous experience. As one of the costume makers described, those new tasks were ‘not’ her ‘normal job’, which was to deal with fabrics not ‘strange things’ like making ‘a giant floor cloth’. She had to learn how to deal with those unfamiliar situations.

The learning pattern, *learning to work as part of a team*, (e) as listed in Table 6.2, is driven by the need to work collectively towards the common goal of putting a show on stage. As illustrated in the experience of the costume makers described in Chapter 5 (Section 5.2.1.5), learning to work as part of the team is very important for the production crew members because failing to learn this skill would cause disappointment or even problems to the team and the working process towards accomplishing a common goal.

Regarding the needs-driven learning activities arising on the business side of the Rainbow Theatre Company, two learning patterns are

identified and shown in Table 6.2: *learning about one's role* and *learning about the company and how things work in other parts of the company*. Each needs-driven learning activity is explained in turn as follows with illustrated examples.

With respect to *learning about one's role* (e), this learning pattern is driven by the need to understand what is involved in one's job and to seek appropriate ways of handling the job. This is identical to the work need that drives the learning pattern *learning about one's role*, (g) - in Table 6.1, as seen in the business-oriented practice in the case of Dream (Section 6.2.1). This particular work need as a driving force of learning is clearly demonstrated in Chapter 5, Section 5.2.2.1, where cited is the experience of the learning and participation coordinator. She indicated that when she first took up her position, she was quite unclear about her responsibilities. Moreover, she was unable to discern what information was relevant for her work in order to progress her role and did not know where to obtain such information. The recurrence of this particular needs-driven learning in the case of Rainbow emphasises the importance of the work need in understanding what is involved in one's job and in seeking appropriate ways of handling the job as well as in driving learning activities in the context of business-oriented practice in both theatre producing organisations under examination.

Learning about the company and how things work in a different part of the company, (f) as listed in Table 6.2, is driven by the need to gain

mutual understanding of each other's work and to know more about one's job in relation to the broader context of the organisation. This learning drive is identical to the one that drives the learning pattern (e) in Table 6.1 (Section 6.2.1). As mentioned in Chapter 5 (Section 5.2.2.1), in the company's recent staff review process, a significant number of employees expressed their hunger for learning in terms of knowing more about the company and how things work in other parts of the organisation. They were keen to learn because they were concerned about the risk of working in isolation due to the slightly fragmented status of the company. The cases of the learning and participation coordinator and the programme coordinator clearly exemplify this particular drive. As coordinators, their jobs required them to make connections with other parts of the organisation as well as to have general understanding of other activities in the company.

6.2.3 DISCUSSIONS OF WORK NEEDS AS A TYPE OF DRIVING FORCE FOR LEARNING

So far, the above analysis has shown that the work needs behind each learning pattern may vary with the nature of the job and the very situations in which specific learning activities occur. Because these work needs are context-specific, depending on the type of work practice involved in a given organisational context, the learning patterns driven by these work needs are also context-specific. Therefore, we see similar as well as different learning patterns in the two cases presented above. A

coherent view of the above-emphasised context-specific feature of learning is seen in Elkjaer (2005). He stated that ‘the learning content is context-specific, and it implies discovery of what is to be done, when and how according to the specific organisational routines...learning also involves being able to give a reasonable account of why things are done and of what sort of person one must become in order to be a competent member of a specific organisation’ (p.44).

A number of studies in the literature have argued for ‘learning as an integral part of practice’ (e.g. Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Brown & Duguid, 1991). However, there is still a need to understand better how learning becomes integral to practice. By identifying work needs as a type of driving force of learning, the present study may offer some new insights into the ‘how’ question. This study suggests that work needs in essence are the interwoven strands of demands for organisation employees’ participation that weave together to create a work practice. In this respect, work needs can be described metaphorically as the ‘textures’ of a work practice, which are the interlinked strands of demands for organisation employees’ participation that weave together to create a work practice. In this respect, work needs shape the nature of a work practice and are inevitably reshaped by the nature of a work practice. The term ‘texture of practices’ is originally seen in Gherardi (2005: 64). He claims that the key idea behind the term is ‘connectedness in action, i.e. the endless series of relationship which

continuously move into each other'. In the present study, the term 'textures' is used differently from Gherardi's (2005) notion and also in a more concrete way to refer to work needs embedded in a given practice. This study argues that situated learning activities are integrated into a work practice through work needs that constitute the 'textures' of that work practice.

Moreover, in recognising work needs as the textures of a work practice that shape the nature of a work practice, the current study may perhaps help to shed light on some of the insightful yet less clearly-articulated ideas propounded in Lave and Wenger (1991). For example, Lave and Wenger (1991) argue that the possibilities for learning are defined by 'the social structure' of practice, 'its power relations, and its conditions for legitimacy' (p.98). As reviewed previously in Chapter 2, the co-authors explain the notion of 'social structure' of practice vaguely through the principle of LLP. As the co-authors argue, 'learners are inevitably participating in communities of practitioners and ... the mastery of knowledge and skills requires newcomers to move towards full participation in the social-cultural practices of a community' (Lave & Wenger, 1991: 29). They use the concept 'legitimate peripheral participation' to describe the above process through which learning occurs. They find that the opportunities for the apprentices to learn in such process is not organised by the relations of an apprentice to his own master, but rather by the apprentice's relations to other apprentices

and even to other masters. This finding leads Lave and Wenger to argue that an apprentice's legitimate access to participation in fuller practices of the community is dependent on the characteristics of the division of labour. In this respect, they argue that 'legitimate participation' is 'not only a crucial condition for learning, but a constitutive element of its content' (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p.35). In this respect, Lave and Wenger argue that the social structure of practice, its power relations, and its conditions for legitimacy define the possibilities for learning (i.e., for legitimate peripheral participation). To some extent, Lave and Wenger's notion of 'structure of practice' can be understood as the way in which practice is organised and arranged in the context of apprenticeships, based on how they describe the process of legitimate peripheral participation.

However, their study leaves open questions as to 'what is the social structure of practice, its power relations, and its conditions for legitimacy'.

A modest extension made by this study to Lave and Wenger's concern about the possibilities of learning, is the recognition of work needs as a driving force for learning in the theatre producing organisations under examination. Thus, this study suggests that the possibility for learning can be derived from the nature of a practice itself in a given organisation context and its demands for certain forms of participation. This suggestion may add an unexpected element to Lave and Wenger's

statement (1991) about what shape the possibilities for learning. In other words, it is possible to consider work needs as one of the conditions beyond ‘the social structure of practice, its power relations, and its conditions for legitimacy’ (Lave & Wenger, 1991: 98) that can shape the possibilities for learning.

Moreover, some of the identified learning patterns may be helpful in clarifying and extending the notion of ‘full participation’ promoted in Lave and Wenger (1991). According to these co-authors, the central defining characteristic of learning is a process that they describe as ‘legitimate peripheral participation’. They use this term to highlight the point that ‘learners inevitably participate in communities of practitioners and that the mastery of knowledge and skill requires newcomers to move toward full participation in the social-cultural practices of a community’ (p.29). The term ‘full participation’ plays an important role in shaping Lave and Wenger’s (1991) conceptualisation of LPP, especially their point about ‘partial participation’. However, the definition of both terms ‘partial participation’ and ‘full participation’ remains vague.

For example, as Lave and Wenger (1991) explain, ‘full participation’ is ‘the end point of centripetal participation in a community of practice ... to which peripheral participation leads’ (Lave & Wenger, 1991: 36). They use the term to emphasise ‘what partial participation is not, or not yet’ (p.37). A key message implied in Lave and Wenger’s notion of ‘full

participation’ and ‘partial participation’ is that participation in practice may have multi-faceted forms, and that learning arises by peripheral forms of participation transforming into more intensive participation.

The present study suggests that regarding work needs as the textures of a work practice that integrate learning and a work practice may help to understand the multi-faceted forms of participation in a given organisation context. This is because a work need, by definition, is the minimum yet necessary level of demands for participation required by the nature of a given practice. If the demands for participation increase, the forms of participation may change accordingly. For example, in Section 6.2.1, I analyse one particular needs-driven learning activity involved in the case of Dream, *learning to deal with unusual roles on the job*, (g) in Table 6.1. This learning activity arose as a result of the increasing demand for some organisation employees’ participation in an organisation’s redevelopment project. This increased demand for participation created a new form of participation for the technical director, which was to engage with a group of architects and building construction planners with whom he had never worked before. Another example of a changing form of participation as the result of increased demand for participation is implied in the needs-driven learning activity in the case of Rainbow, *learning to deal with unfamiliar tasks on the job*, (c) in Table 6.2. Here, a costume maker became involved in the form of participation (e.g., making the giant floor clothes with different

materials in this case) that was not usual to her normal work practice of making costumes with fabrics.

As mentioned repeatedly, the nature of making theatre productions is largely exploratory and fluid in the ever-changing nested grid of time, space, people, and theatre production. This means that this type of practice is endowed with a level of uncertainty; perhaps the only certainty is change. This point has been exemplified particularly in the finding of the learning activities *learning to solve problems quickly as they emerge* (in both cases), and *learning to deal with unfamiliar tasks on the job* (in the case of Rainbow).

In addition, in recognising the different work needs and situations through which learning arises in a given organisation, this study contributes to the existing research on learning patterns by producing detailed descriptions of some of the specific learning activities that people actually engage in, and of people's sense-making of those actions from their own points of view. This echoes a number of scholars' concerns that learning cannot be isolated and studied as though it were a discrete activity (Cook and Yanow 1993; Nicolini and Mezner 1995; Nicolini, Gherardi et al. 1996; Gherardi and Nicolini 2000; Karen, Timothy et al. 2007).

As shown in the literature review chapter, previous studies have claimed that learning arises through the participation in some form of legitimate peripherality (Lave & Wenger, 1991), involvement in Cops (Brown &

Duguid, 1991), or through sharing of cultural values and beliefs (Yanow, 2000). To enrich and expand these studies, the present research suggests that some learning activities involved in each of the theatre producing organisations under examination are rendered possible by being driven by the work needs of a work practice. By recognising work needs as a type of driving force of learning, this study suggests that possibilities for learning do not necessarily depend upon the principal elements of ‘community membership’, (e.g. Lave & Wenger, 1991; Brown & Duguid, 1991; Wenger, 1998) or ‘a deep sharing’ of cultural values (e.g. Cook & Yanow, 1993; Yanow 2000) that were so suggestive in some of the previous studies. In contrast, the emergence of learning activities through work needs are more associated with the nature of a work practice.

6.3 OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENGAGEMENT IN WORK PRACTICES AS A TYPE OF DRIVING FORCE FOR SITUATED LEARNING

Opportunities for engagement in work practices are identified as another type of driving force making possible situated learning in both theatre producing organisations under examination. This driving force of learning is also identified through further thematic analysis of the situations where the identified learning activities reported in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 arise. The analysis follows the same set of inquiring

principles as mentioned in Section 6.2 through probing questions such as: What is the thing that connects each of the identified learning activities with a particular work practice? ‘What is this ‘thing’ in nature and what is the relationship between this ‘thing’ and that particular work practice?

The present study uses the term ‘opportunities for engagement in work practices’ to refer to the embedded or emerging opportunities that provide conditions for participation in a work practice in the context of a given work organisation. The study regards ‘opportunities for engagement in work practices’ as the structuring elements of a work practice that is shaped by the ways in which that work practice is organised in the context of a given organisation. In this respect, the notion of ‘opportunities for engagement in work practices’ is also a context-dependent concept. This means that what comprises it varies according to the types of work practices involved in the context of a given work organisation. As indicated previously, the term ‘practice’ is regarded as a system of activities in which knowing is not separate from doing, following Gherardi (2000).

Unlike work needs, which emphasise the demands for participation that shape the nature of a given work practice and are inevitably reshaped by the nature of a work practice, opportunities for engagement in work practices draws attention to the ‘supply’ of conditions that allow organisation employees access to a given practice or multiple practices

through participation. For presentation convenience, I use the term ‘opportunities-driven learning’ to refer to the learning activities that are driven by opportunities for engagement in work practices.

The remainder of this section is divided into three sub-sections: Section 6.3.1 analyses the opportunities-driven learning activities identified in the case of Dream, and establishes what comprise the opportunities for engagement in work practices for these learning activities. Section 6.3.2 analyses the opportunities-driven learning activities identified in the case of Rainbow and establishes what comprise the opportunities for engagement in work practices for these learning activities. By presenting each case in turn, this study is able to demonstrate learning activities uninterruptedly within the immediate contexts in which learning is embedded. In these sub-sections, the present study’s findings on the patterns of opportunities-driven learning are compared and contrasted with the relevant learning patterns in the reviewed OL literature. Section 6.2.3 discusses the significance of recognising opportunities for engagement in work practices as a type of driving force for learning in relation to the relevant previous studies in the OL literature.

6.3.1 OPPORTUNITIES-DRIVEN LEARNING IN THE CASE OF DREAM

The identified opportunities-driven learning activities from the case study of Dream include the following two: *learning to collaborate*; and

learning from other's experiences. These opportunities-driven learning activities are listed below in the left column of Table 6.3. The opportunities for engagement in work practices that drive each learning activity listed in the left-hand column of Table 6.3 include the following two: *the opportunity to identify common interests by using a contextual tool shared across team and departmental boundaries in the organisation;* and *the opportunity to observe how other colleagues do a similar job.* These opportunities for engagement in work practices are indicated in the right-hand column of Table 6.3.

Table 6. 3 opportunity-driven learning activities IN the case of Dream

a. Learning to collaborate	a. The opportunity to identify common interests by using a contextual tool shared across team and departmental boundaries in the organisation
b. Learning from others' experiences	b. The opportunity to observe how other colleagues do a similar job

As Table 6.3 shows, this study identifies that only some opportunities-driven learning activities arise in the local process of engaging in business-oriented practice. This does not imply that opportunities-driven learning may not arise in relation to the work area of production-oriented practice. However, unfortunately, due to the limited fieldwork access to the production-oriented areas of practice, this study cannot

provide further insights on the subject. Thus, for the case of Dream, the analysis and discussions of the opportunities-driven learning activities focus exclusively on those identified in relation to the business-oriented practice. Each of the opportunities-driven learning activities is illustrated with indicative examples as follows.

Learning to collaborate, (a) as shown in Table 6.3, is driven by the opportunity to identify common interests by using a conceptual tool shared across team and departmental boundaries in the organisation. An example is provided in the process of adopting the new database for Dream's box office system, as described in Chapter 4 (Section 4.2.2.1). This opportunity allowed the participants to experience the practice outside their own departmental contexts and to explore the potential common interests among them. In other words, the level of participation of some of the organisation employees was increased because they had access to the conditions that allowed these participants to identify common interests shared by other members of staff. This would not be recognisable without access to such conditions. The access to these conditions is mediated by the use of a contextual tool, in the case of Dream, a database system that allowed information and knowledge sharing about issues of common concern.

As reported earlier in the case of Dream (Chapter 4), the participants who had access to the use of the tool were able to make connections with other working areas of the company, which eventually led them to

learn to collaborate with each other. As noted earlier by some interviewees, individuals in different parts of the company had rarely worked so well together before the adoption of the new shared tool.

This particular opportunities-driven learning activity described above can be linked to Lave and Wenger's (1991) arguments on 'legitimate peripherality', which also address the issue of the degree of participation. According to Lave and Wenger (1991), legitimate peripherality can be a place where a participant is empowered to move toward more intensive participation. In the case of my study, the degree of participation could be enhanced by having access to the opportunity to identify common interests through the use of a shared tool. Although each study draws their findings from two rather different organisation contexts, their point in common lies in the non-static degree of participation. This seems to suggest that there is an element beyond the practice itself that has an influence on the degree of participation. In Lave and Wenger's view (1991), this element is related to the issue of 'social organisation of and control over resources' (p. 37). As reviewed previously, Lave and Wenger (1991) see 'resource' as a medium and outcome of participating in communities of practice. They argue that 'structuring resources' shape the process and content of learning possibilities and apprentices' changing perspectives on what is known and done. They point out that 'the 'transparency' of the socio-political organisation of practice and of its artifacts engaged in practice is 'a

crucial resource for increasing participation’ (Lave & Wenger, 1991: 91). As they indicate, the transparency of the social-political organisation of practice can lie in the use of artifacts (e.g., technology) as a way of encoding and revealing the knowledge within a community of practice (COP), and ways of perceiving and manipulating characteristic of COP. In the case of my study, it was found that the use of a database system helped people to become involved in a more interconnected form of participation with other members of the organisation.

Lave and Wenger’s concern about the structuring resources for learning through the exemplification of the ‘transparency’ of social and political organisation of practice provides supporting evidence from the literature for my analysis of one of the opportunities-driven learning activities identified in the Case of Dream, described above. Moreover, this study offers additional insight into links between learning possibility and practice through the recognition of opportunities-driven learning activities.

The learning pattern *learning from others’ experiences*, (b) in Table 6.3, is driven by the opportunity to observe other colleagues doing a similar job or dealing with a particular situation identical to one’s own job. This particular type of opportunity-based learning drive is closely linked to the lack of other means of developing one’s work experience (e.g., formal training). Bandura’s ‘social learning theory’ (1969; 1977) also

addresses the issue of ‘observation’ in relation to learning. According to Bandura’s theory, ‘most human behaviour is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others one forms an idea of how new behaviours are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action’ (Bandura 1977: 22). Although Bandura’s ‘social learning theory’ addresses the issue of observing other people’s experiences as an mechanism of learning, the cognitive perspective view of learning still plays a considerable role in Bandura’s theorising approach to learning. Such an approach emphasises that ‘intention, retention, reproduction and motivations’ are the necessary conditions for effective modelling of learning. This emphasis differs fundamentally from the situated learning perspectives that which depict learning as being integral to practice. This means that situated learning activity cannot be separated from its context and practice. In this respect, the opportunities-driven learning activity *learning from other’s experiences* emphasises the opportunity of observing others as the very progress of being engaged in one’s own work practice and, therefore, is not the same as the learning pattern described Bandura’s ‘social learning theory’.

Moreover, this opportunity to observe others is closely linked to the context of the theatre producing organisation under examination. As indicated previously, there were limited financial and time resources to spend on formal training for organisation employees. Therefore, as a

number of interviewees stated, people tended to seek informal learning opportunities from the people working around them. The context of work meetings was one such informal learning opportunity where the participants involved were able to observe how other people handled a particular situation or problem. As indicated in Chapter 4 (Section 4.2.2.2), a number of managers indicated that they were able to learn management skills from their line managers or other more experienced members of staff by observing them when they had work meetings together. One of the respondents illustrated this point by stating (as seen in Chapter 4, Section 4.2.2.2):

‘I see [my boss] the Chief Executive manage the Dream Board in a very skilled way. I’ve learned a great deal from watching her ... by observing. We have pretty frequent contact. I have regular meetings with her (the Executive Director). I also observe in other meetings.’

However, a point to note is that such learning opportunities available through the context of work meetings were not necessarily accessible to all the organisation’s employees in lower positions in the organisational hierarchy. This point, to some extent, is illustrated in the following interview quotation:

‘There is a missing link in the sequence of communication and opportunity to talk to other people who are actually, I suppose, on the slightly higher plane of management.’

Here, it is important to emphasise that the opportunity to observe others in a process of practice differs from the opportunities to observe in a formal training environment. The former allows the observer to visualise the actual process of undertaking a practice in context and, most importantly, to learn directly about the experiences of others in context, whereas the latter does not. A coherent view is offered by Karen and Sturdy (2007), who suggest that the opportunities to observe and imitate are dependent on the participatory opportunities available to the individual. For example, the leadership training programme as described in the case of Dream could not be considered as an opportunity for observation in a process of practice because it was merely an abstraction of information and knowledge out of its specific context and, therefore, would be less meaningful for the participants.

6.3.2 OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENGAGEMENT IN WORK PRACTICES IN THE CASE OF RAINBOW

With respect to the case of Rainbow, the identified opportunities-driven learning activities include the following two: *learning from other colleagues' experiences* and *learning about one's job*. These opportunities-driven learning activities are listed in Table 6.4 (left-hand column). The opportunities for engagement in work practices that drive these listed learning activities are: the opportunity to observe and imitate other colleagues doing a similar job or dealing with a particular situation identical to one's own job, and the opportunity to explore different

experiences/information and develop oneself on the job within a rather informal, open-minded and supportive company culture. These two opportunities for engagement in work practices are listed in the right-hand column of Table 6.4.

Table 6.4 opportunities-driven learning in the case of Rainbow

Opportunities-driven learning situated in the local process of engaging in production-oriented practice	Opportunities for engagement in work practices driving the listed learning activities (left-hand column) in production-oriented practice
a. Learning from other colleagues' experiences	a. The opportunity to observe and imitate other colleagues doing a similar job or dealing with a particular situations identical to one's own job
Opportunity-driven learning situated in the local process of engaging in business-oriented practice	Opportunities for engagement in work practices driving the listed learning activities (left-hand column) in business-oriented practice
b. Learning about one's job	b. The opportunity to explore different experiences/information and develop oneself on the job within a rather informal, open-minded and supportive company culture

The opportunity to observe and imitate other colleagues doing a similar job or dealing with a particular situation identical to one's own job is

similar to that analysed for the learning pattern (b) in Table 6.3, as seen in Section 6.3.1. However, a point to note is that the observation opportunity addressed here in the case of Rainbow was available through the process of production making, a different context from the formal work meetings mentioned previously.

As indicated in Chapter 5 -Vignette 1, because the process of making a production was ‘constantly evaluated’, the input elements from different production crew members were often exposed to each other for that very purpose. Activities such as stage fit-up, technical rehearsals, and process evaluation meetings, as described previously, were such opportunities for production crew members to observe and then to learn from each other’s experiences. For example, in Chapter 5, Section 5.2.1.3, one of the lighting technicians explained that the opportunity allowing him to learn from the experiences of other lighting technicians was just through ‘being nosy’ and seeing how his colleagues worked the lighting desk. Similarly, some costume makers indicated that they were able to learn the necessary experiences from other costume makers in the department by having the opportunity to ask questions and observe how other costume makers undertake their work, as shown in the same section.

To some extent, the learning pattern driven by the opportunity to observe other colleagues’ experiences in the production-making process shares a common feature with the learning pattern described by Lave and Wenger (1991) in their study of apprenticeships. As Lave and

Wenger argue, it is the relation of an apprentice to other apprentices that provide opportunities to learn, rather than the relation to his own master. In the case of Rainbow (Chapter 5, Section 5.2.1.3), it was noted that the opportunity to observe others in the process of production making was also arranged informally around the relations among production crew members.

Turning to the business side of the company, *learning to do one's job* is also driven by the opportunity to explore different experiences/information and develop oneself on the job within a rather informal, open-minded and supportive company culture. As indicated previously in Chapter 5 (Section 5.1.1), the general view of the company's culture is that it is open and supportive. The organisation's employees are generally encouraged to 'go and find' out information themselves and most people are quite 'approachable'. Moreover, some interviewees pointed out particularly that they felt supported and trusted by their line managers to try out different strategies and develop their own ways of handling the job. The shadowing activity explained in Chapter 5 (Section 5.2.2.1) was one such opportunity that permitted the learning and participation coordinator to learn how to do a backstage tour from an experienced learning officer. Other examples are seen in the experience of the programme coordinator and several marketing officers. They emphasised that they had been learning their role by working with their line members, who cared about employees' learning

needs and learning experiences. As mentioned in the examples (Section 5.2.2.1), such managers allowed room for the learners to stretch their competences by letting them try out different tasks and, at the same time, giving the learners the necessary guidance when required.

6.3.3. DISCUSSIONS OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENGAGEMENT IN WORK PRACTICES AS A TYPE OF DRIVING FORCE FOR LEARNING

As shown in the above accounts, opportunities for engagement in work practices is another type of driving force through which some of the learning activities (as shown in Tables 6.3 and 6.4) arise in each of the case companies under examination. The above accounts also show that what constitute specific opportunities for engagement in work practices vary with different situations depending on the ways in which work practices are arranged in the given organisation. Because these opportunities for engagement in work practices are context-specific, the learning activities driven by them are also context-specific. In this respect, we see similar as well as different learning patterns in the two cases.

The recognition of different opportunities for engagement in work practices as learning drivers means that learning can occur spontaneously - when the opportunities for engagement in work practices are available in the workplace. This theoretical finding concurs

with the concept of 'learning curriculum' suggested by Lave and Wenger (1991). As noted in the literature review chapter, their notion of a learning curriculum consists of situated opportunities for the improvisational development of new practice from the perspective of learners. This notion is based on Lave and Wenger's view that learning is an improvised practice. In this respect, Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of 'learning curriculum' provides coherent evidence for the recognition of opportunities as potential situations for learning to arise. However, their study makes no real attempt to elaborate on the notion of 'learning curriculum'. Therefore, it is not clear from Lave and Wenger's (1991) study what kinds of situated opportunities could constitute the 'learning curriculum'. In this respect, the recognition of various types of opportunities for engagement in work practices may help to enrich Lave and Wenger's concept of 'learning curriculum' by indicating its potential components. As shown in my case studies, the identified opportunities for engagement in work practices include situations where organisation employees can: identify common interests through use of a shared database; observe and imitate other colleagues in the context of their work; explore experiences and self-development in a relatively supportive and informal organisational and managerial culture.

In similar vein to Lave and Wenger's term 'learning curriculum', Gherardi et al. (1998) use the slightly different term, 'situated curriculum', to express their perception of the relationship between

learning and opportunities in the context of an Italian building company. As reviewed in Chapter 2, in their paper, situated curriculum is used to address the pattern of learning opportunities available to the novice site managers as newcomers in their encounter with the community of Italian building firms. Gherardi *et al.* (1998) argue that the situated curriculum provides them with the necessary know-how: ‘novices start with activities that give them an appreciation of the different aspects of the production process and then revert to specific tasks’ (p.288).

Each of the concepts, learning curriculum suggested by Lave and Wenger (1991), and situated curriculum propounded by Gherardi *et al.* (1998), provides an insight into the circumstances that give rise to learning from the newcomers’ perspectives. Suggested in these concepts is the notion that learning happens in association with opportunities through practice. To some extent, their emphasis on practice provides theoretical support for my argument for opportunities for engagement in work practices.

More importantly, the present study advances the above view by identifying further what constitutes such opportunities and their variations in different situations with concrete examples in support of the argument. This finding enhances the view of Gherardi *et al.* (1998) that learning requires access and opportunities to take part in the ongoing practice. Similarly, Wenger (1998) stresses the importance of ensuring that participants have access to the resources necessary to learn

what they need in order to take action and make decisions that fully engage their own knowledge ability.

To summarise, Section 6.2 and Section 6.3 have demonstrated that the identified learning activities from both case studies arose from at least one of the following two types of driving forces: work needs and opportunities for engagement in work practices. As this study shows throughout the analysis above, two important elements of a work practice can be attributed to the possibilities for learning in the context of the theatre producing organisations under examination: the ‘textures’ of a work practice (work needs) and the structural elements of a work practice (opportunities for engagement in work practices). Work needs, in essence, shape the nature of a work practice and, at the same time, are inevitably reshaped by the nature of that work practice. Opportunities for engagement in work practices essentially are the structural elements of a work practice that are shaped by the ways in which a practice is organised and related to the broader context of a given organisation.

In the next section (Section 6.4), I examine in each of the case companies the influence of management intervention that aims at stimulating learning within their organisations. The analysis and discussions focus on how such management intervention influences possibilities for learning to arise through work needs and opportunities for engagement in work practices. Section 6.4 also draws our attention to the power struggles associated with management intervention.

6. 4 THE INFLUENCE OF MANAGEMENT

INTERVENTION ON LEARNING POSSIBILITIES

The analysis of both case studies shows that the management intervention within each theatre company seems to have a double-edged impact on the possibilities for needs-driven learning and opportunities-driven learning. The term ‘management intervention’ here is used to refer to the intentional initiatives made by individual managers or a group of managers for the purpose of boosting or/and directing learning in their organisations, as described in the previous two case chapters. The impact of management intervention on the possibilities for needs-driven learning implied in both of the case studies has at least one of the following two dimensions. First, management intervention can cause conflicting interests that overshadow the work needs embedded in the local process of undertaking particular work practices from a non-managerial point of view. Second, management intervention can cause tensions that inhibit people’s participation in their day-to-day local work practices through which the needs-driven learning is mostly experienced or may possibly arise.

Management intervention in the possibility for opportunities-driven learning implied in both of the cases under examination also has at least one of two dimensions. First, management intervention can serve to extend the access to existing opportunities for engagement in work practices to the wider group of participants in the organisation. Second,

management intervention can create new opportunities for engagement in work practices that provide the condition for potential opportunities-driven learning to arise.

Some of the previous OL studies seek to associate the idea of organisational learning or learning organisation with the negative connotation of power (e.g. as managerial ideology of control and domination). In contrast, my study suggests that management intervention has unexpected double-edged consequences on learning possibilities; both constraining to some needs-driven learning possibilities and encouraging to some opportunities-driven learning possibilities. In the remainder of this section, the impact of management intervention on each category of learning possibilities is explained and discussed in relation to the relevant OL literature reviewed in Chapter 2.

6. 4.1 THE IMPACT OF MANAGEMENT INTERVENTION ON THE POSSIBILITIES FOR NEEDS-DRIVEN LEARNING

Regarding the case of Dream, the impact of management intervention is seen in both dimensions: a. causing conflicting interests that overshadow work needs embedded in the local process of undertaking particular work practices for the purpose of achieving practice accomplishment rather than for managerial interest; b. causing tensions that inhibit people's participation in their day-to-day local practice through which the needs-driven learning is mostly experienced or may possibly arise.

As reported in Chapter 4, the management intervention considered in the case of Dream is mainly seen through the initiative of pursuing a learning organisation vision for the company's strategic development. Conflicts of interest and perspective within the organisation began to emerge in the early stage of exploration of the learning organisation vision, where the 'learning organisation meetings' and in-house training were initiatives resulting from management intervention.

As shown in Section 4.3.1, there was a clear division in the learning organisation meetings called to discuss the meaning of a learning organisation and its practical implications. The conflicts lay in a fundamental difference between the learning interests drawn from the managerial perspective and those drawn from the local practice perspective regarding the aims and implications of the learning organisation vision. The managerial interest in learning was to create a learning organisation that fosters learning in all employees (Dixon 1998). As indicated in Chapter 4 (Section 4.3), the vision was to 'inspire all members of Dream to learn and work at the same time'. This managerial interest in learning focused on manipulating a shared meaning of a 'learning organisation' vision and its implications for the organisation's employees. In those 'learning organisation meetings', the attendants with managerial interest therefore suggested encouraging every organisation member to learn about theatre and theatre making. In contrast, the practical interests arising in those 'learning organisation

meetings' were more concerned with the relevance of having a broad 'learning organisation vision' linked to the work need to undertake local practices. The meeting attendants who came in with practical interests believed that learning should be personal and 'local' for different employees. An illustrative quotation was listed in Chapter 4, (Section 4.3.1) when one interviewee stated:

'It was a very romantic view that people who work in the entire organisation, including people who are working in the canteen, you know, manual workers, should experience the same level of learning as people who are really interested in theatre and making productions...You shouldn't impose anything on people whose interest isn't there. They should rather learn to do their job better...'

The above quotation indicates clearly that the articulation of a learning organisation vision from the managerial perspective was a mismatch with the practical interests in learning in the workplace and overlooked the individual differentials from a non-management point of view. As Drive (2002) reminded us, the promise of an 'ideal workplace' where every employee could learn at the same level is perhaps potentially a manipulative and exploitative tool masking more power of control by the dominant groups in terms of deciding what and how people should learn. However, Hardy (1996) also pointed out that although managers can change underlying values and norms of the organisation by managing meaning, the use of this dimension of power alone is less

capable of focusing on specific behaviour. As a consequence, it is more likely to hinder effective strategic change as desired by the dominant individuals/groups. One possible interpretation for this is that conflicts of interests may play out around the management intervention. This point is exemplified in one of the cases as detailed below.

The implicit exercise of management power was detected in the Dream case when more conflicts of interest were revealed with respect to making decisions about what actions to take in pursuit of a LO vision. As indicated earlier in Chapter 4, the senior members of the company decided to opt for the action point suggested by the learning manager in the human resource department, namely, to deliver a leadership training programme as an initial step to moving towards a learning organisation vision. At the superficial level, organising training programmes can be seen as a 'normal' part of management activities due to the presumed essence of management in terms of 'planning, organizing, learning and controlling' (Tsoukas, 1994: 292). A learning organisation vision may promise more employee participation by virtue of encouraging learning at all levels. However, there might be a dominant coalition, a concern expressed by Driver (2002), which determines what kind of learning is acceptable (Duncan and Weiss 1979; Coopey 1995; Easterby-Smith 1997). This echoes Coopey's (1998) view that the means of control and influence of management are not exercised through the explicit wielding of power and coercion; rather they are translated into the routine

disciplinary practices of everyday life. In the present case, this is achieved through the promoting and organising of a leadership training programme.

However, this form of management intervention as an implicit exercise of management power attempting to stimulate learning within the organisation actually generated more conflicting interests in learning. This conflict of interests overshadowed the learning interests embedded in the local process of undertaking particular practices from the work needs perspective. The term ‘conflicting interests in learning’ refers to the different emphases evident in the variety of ways in which people wished to be involved in learning in their organisation. As noted earlier, the learning manager who delivered the ‘leadership training programme’ wanted the programme participants to learn to be leaders in the particular way that was taught in the programme. However, a number of interviewees who attended the programme considered it to be oversimplified and theoretically-driven because it failed to take account of the nature of a theatrical organisation and its actual work needs. Some interviewees noted that the programme participants felt that they were being taught in an ‘A level class’ with ‘teaching material’ that was ‘a bit basic’ for them. The conflicting interests in learning associated with the management intervention were also revealed by another interviewee in the following quotation:

‘I am not sure whether people necessarily want to know what theories are or what has been done to them. People want to feel engaged. I don’t know. I guess I am not keen about learning organisation theory and I am keener about organisation practice. I’ve been in a lot of training sessions here where more people are talking about different theories and we have thought very hard about it; but actually, what really matters is that managers get off their arses and change their behaviour and they change the things they do within their teams...’

The training sessions mentioned by the above interviewee referred to the work meetings organised by the senior members of staff for the purpose of discussing the meaning and implications of a learning organisation vision for Dream. This quotation shows that some organisation employees felt that involvement in discussions of different ideas of a learning vision did not necessarily provide them with a sense of engagement. Rather, people expected to feel engaged through changes to their managers’ own behaviours and the ways they introduce such changes to people. The different expectations towards learning between the managers and those being managed eventually led to conflict of interests in more respects. These conflicting interests were especially evident in the actual process of engaging learning and the work needs involved in an arts organisation as well as the particular ways of working in this type of organisation. Thus, tension was inevitable between the needs-driven learning and the managerial aspiration for

learning as a result of the arising of more conflicts of interests in the workplace.

In this respect, the considered management intervention in the case of Dream caused tensions that inhibited people's participation in their day-to-day local practice through which the needs-driven learning was mostly experienced or could possibly arise. In the case of Dream, one of the tensions related to the problematic ways in which the learning manager was involved in the learning organisation initiative. As indicated in Chapter 4 (Section 4.3.1) because the learning manager tried to impose a particular model of learning organisation and criticised the existing learning ability of the organisation, a number of attendants in the meeting felt discouraged and disappointed. The cause of such emotions was fundamentally linked to the different perceptions of the needs of an arts organisation and people's expert knowledge preferences.

As indicated in the case of Dream, initially, from the senior management perspective, the person selected to help in the learning organisation vision was identified as an 'expert' with relevant experience in developing learning activities in other types of organisations. However, some interviewees who were less senior in position and concerned more about a lower level of practice questioned whether the senior managers should have identified this person as a real expert for their particular kind of organisation. One respondent even

considered this ‘expert’ to be ‘external’ to the company because her ‘previous experience’ was not particularly relevant to the realities in a theatre-producing organisation. This implies that the ordinary employees of the organisation were rather reluctant to accept changes not typically required by their work needs. As the same interviewee further commented, it was a management mistake to identify ‘an external person’ to assist with the learning organisation vision because there was a fundamental mismatch between what the expert could offer and what was needed in an arts organisation. This different perception about the organisation and ‘expert knowledge’ preference from a practical point of view was illustrated earlier in Dream’s report (Section 4.3.1) in the following words:

‘I think that by identifying the external people (the learning manager) who were going to work with us in that process, there was a fundamental mismatch between... the level of the management team, and the level of expertise that we brought in to help us to develop. So, effectively, we brought in someone who was hugely experienced at developing middle management in small and medium-sized businesses. However, this person was not really terribly skilled at, or experienced in developing these sorts of activities within arts organisations or within senior management teams. It was a mismatch; just didn’t work. We would have, of course, learned as much from the failure as we would

have done from the success. You know, it's our fault that we weren't very clear about what it was that we wanted...'

This quotation demonstrates that the management intervention undertaken by pursuing the LO vision did not succeed in directing learning in the way intended. Rather, it reveals the tension between what was perceived as actually required on the job and what was perceived as strategically 'good' for the organisation. One possible interpretation of the failure of the training programme could be that the pressures from the 'top' of the organisation actually inhibited the potentially divergent voices on the real work needs in practice. It is Coopey's (1998) view that corporate managers have 'considerable advantage over other stakeholders' in terms of 'determining which interests should be served by an organisation', and 'produce meanings that obscure the web of asymmetrical power relations and the processes of control expressed through them' (p. 367). However, as shown in the case of Dream, managers may 'enjoy' their advantage over others in terms of deciding which interests should be served by an organisation, but they do not necessarily succeed in shaping the best way of serving them from a local practice point of view. This is because the power of management is affected by the forces that drive situated learning from locally embedded work needs in practice.

As a result of the increasing conflicts of interest and tensions indicated above, the training programme failed to engage the participants

sufficiently to prompt their learning and, therefore, was aborted. This outcome led some employees to question the rationale of the management initiative to pursue a learning organisation, which they considered to be the main cause of the failure. This unsuccessful implementation of the training programme, in turn, aggravated the conflicts of interests and perspectives regarding the pursuit of a learning organisation. The rise of emotions and tensions associated with the wielding of management power also attributed to the failure of the training programme. As Vince (2001) argues, emotion is political because emotions that are ignored or avoided can consciously or unconsciously have an impact on organising and learning.

Similar findings on the negative impact of management intervention on learning are also seen in the study of Vince (2001). He examined the emotions and politics generated around two competing organisational change initiatives promoted by managers from two different units of an organisation. As reviewed in Chapter 2, the two change initiatives fundamentally mirrored the underlying tension between managers who wanted to remain focused on the 'core' business of the company and those who wanted market 'growth'. As a consequence, a split between the utilities business and the commercial business in the 'Hyder organization' was created. These differences in perception of the organisation were reinforced through everyday decisions, interactions and avoidance of interaction (Vince, 2001). As Vince (2001) pointed

out, emotions and politics were generated around these two competing organisational change initiatives. For example, there were fears in the Hyder organisation about the possibility of conflict between the two sides, which resulted in a lack of communication in the company. At the same time, there was considerable anxiety surrounding expectations relating to the commercial success of both individual managers as well as the success of the organisation as a whole. Moreover, Vince (2001) argued that the power relations surrounding the changing initiatives were cautious and controlling, motivated by fear of failure and reinforced by a fear of conflict. Conflicts tended to be covered over rather than dealt with because there was little or no communication about how these two initiatives might conflict with each other. The Hyder case could be argued to be a good example of an organisation in which senior management was doing much to support learning within the organisation. However, as Vince (2001) pointed out, it was difficult to sustain and implement the initial enthusiasm for learning in the organisation because the emotions and power relations surrounding the initiative restricted learning. These findings as highlighted in Vince's study of the Hyder case (2001) enhance my argument that management intervention has a constraining impact on learning possibilities by causing conflicts of interests. At the same time, my study extends the current debate on power issues by recognising the co-existence of the power of management and the power of engaging in practice. The interplay between both elements is argued to reflect a continuous pull

between the desire for learning according to work needs and the inspiration for learning from managerial perspectives.

The finding on the failed training programme as highlighted in the case of Dream also seems to support Coopey and Burgoyne's (2000) argument that pressures from internal sources such as director and experts can inhibit the will and ability of workers to engage effectively in the 'negotiation of meaning' (Wenger, 2003) with respect to the learning organisation vision. At the same time, the conflicts of interest and tensions revealed in the case of Dream as a result of management intervention also link to Lave and Wenger's (1991) distinction between the concepts of 'a learning curriculum' and 'a teaching curriculum'. As shown in the case of Dream, the 'learning organisation meetings' reveal learning interests from practical perspectives and the learning interests from managerial perspectives. The former interest is similar to Lave and Wenger's view of 'a learning curriculum' as being representative of the learner's perspective of learning; whereas the latter is similar to 'a teaching curriculum' in Lave and Wenger's terms (1991). 'A teaching curriculum' represents an external view of learning, where the meaning of what is learned or what is to be learned is not shaped by the learner's perspective, but mediated through an instructor's participation. The training programme described in the case of Dream can be seen as such a form of teaching curriculum instructed through management intervention. In this respect, the present study provides an enriched

understanding of the concept of 'teaching curriculum' by showing how a teaching curriculum took form under the influence of management intervention, as well as its impact on the possibilities for learning.

As reviewed in Chapter 2, another empirically-based study addressing similar issues of conflicts of interest as a result of management intervention is offered by Raz and Fadon (2005). In their study, they explore the social construction of organisational learning by examining the responses of members of an organisation to a management-imposed teaching curriculum that contradicted basic assumptions about professional identity. As reviewed in Chapter 2, Raz and Fadon's (2005) study explores the meaning and interplay between the management ideology, its implementation of a teaching curriculum, and its interpretation of this teaching curriculum by the medical school students and their physician supervisors in medical school workshops. Their findings suggest that the emergent situated learning curricular was in conflict with the teaching curriculum imposed by the management group of the medical school. This was so because two dimensions of communication skills (instrumental and competence) were perceived and interpreted differently under managerial culture and workplace culture. The teaching curricular in the managerial culture emphasises the importance of both dimensions of communication skills. In contrast, in the workplace culture, the instrumental dimension of communication skills is subsumed under the competence dimension.

The conflicts of interests between the managerial perspectives and the practical perspective arise through the implementation of teaching curricular on communication skills, as shown in Raz and Fadlon's (2005) study. They provide some coherent empirical evidence to support my argument that management intervention can cause conflicts of interests that overshadow the work needs from a local practice point of view. In the context of the medical school studied by Raz and Fadlon (2005), the work needs of the medical student and physicians that supervise these students would be the need to use communication skills for disease-centred (diagnosis and treatment) practice during clinical education rather than for patient-centred practice.

The empirical findings of the impact of management intervention in terms of causing conflicts of interest as shown both in the present study and in Raz and Fadlon's study (2005) echo Contu and Willmott's (2003) view. The latter find that different sets of practices located in different space-time contexts could generate diverse and competing conceptions of the degree of consensus, diversity or conflict. This is because management intervention is a different set of practices from those locally-embedded practices that are concerned more with day-to-day activities of the organisation at micro levels.

At the stage of recommitting to a learning organisation vision in the case of Dream, more tensions were revealed as new management intervention emerged in the course of pursuing the vision. As indicated

in Chapter 4 (Section 4.3.2), there were tensions around the issues of ‘having a split focus’ on the job, increased workloads, and the time orientation of ‘looking forward’ versus ‘looking backwards’. Tension also arose from the frustration of ‘cancelling meetings’, ‘prioritising’ problems, and ‘hesitating’ when making suggestions’.

These tensions cited above can be analysed under one broader category: the tension between the demands of existing workload and the demands of emerging workloads. The issue of ‘having a split focus’ was particularly highlighted by interviewees from the production side of the company. They were burdened not only with the demands of their practical roles (e.g., focusing on the process of production making), but also with the demands of their managerial roles (e.g., solving problems about staffing, spacing and scheduling, etc.). These interviewees commonly pointed out that the transactional period of the organisation under the new management initiatives had generated quite a tense pull between the demands of their practical and managerial roles.

This category of tension implies that management intervention created a new level of demands for participation of some organisation employees on top of their work needs-based level of participation. As defined earlier, the notion of work needs refers to the minimum yet necessary level of demand for employees’ participation in a given practice, which is shaped by the nature of the practice itself. As seen in both case studies, management intervention can result in an increased demand for

its employees' participation in activities not central to the normal practice required of the participant on a day-to-day basis. However, no obvious evidence was found to show a corresponding enhanced supply of conditions for participation (such as an expanded allocation of extra organisational time). This is a rather unexpected finding that suggests new insights into the power literature in management. As reviewed in Chapter 2, the mainstream management literature adopted the view of power closely associated with the control and development of organisational resources – such as 'the power of resources' as reviewed by Hardy (1996). Similarly, Tsoukas (1994) indicated that managers must have delegated authority and discretionary rights over the integration of resources so that they can make a difference to the resources being combined and transformed. However, the power of management can operate and influence decision/behaviour outcomes without necessarily using or developing organisational resources. The exercise of power can be achieved by managers imposing a new level of demand for participation of the employees in managerially desired organisational activities.

A consequence of this new level of demand for participation is the shifted use of time resources from the existing workload to emerging work activities within the organisation. Because the time resources available in a given work organisation are usually predefined under a certain employment principle, there is competition in terms of use of

organisation time resources for the existing demands for participation. This implies that the exercise of management power can actually undermine the allocation of the existing organisational resources rather than developing them. This is particularly the case with respect to the availability of organisational time. As a consequence, existing work demands compete with the emerging participation demands. This problem of increasing time pressure and the scarcity of the organisation's time resource is attributed to difficulties in nurturing the existing practices in which organisational employees are normally involved in their day-to-day jobs. In this respect, the needs-driven learning situated in those daily jobs, therefore, becomes undernourished. As Garvin (1993) reminded us, a general understanding in the strikingly little writing about the role of time in organisation learning processes is that learning requires time. However, existing literature on organisation learning may have oversimplified the relationship between time and learning in an organisation, especially if we consider the interference of management power and its consequences.

As indicated earlier in Chapter 4, a number of interviewees highlighted the issue that the organisation was facing a dilemma about how to nurture learning on the job coupled with the problem of time scarcity. The following quotation clearly illustrated this dilemma in Chapter 4 (Section 4.3.2):

‘The organisation is willing to help people with its learning. It is a very willing organisation; but in reality, sometimes there just isn’t the time for learning. For instance, our IT work splits into proactive and reactive. Reactive is when things go wrong, where we are all reacting to a requirement that comes out of the blue...At times the proportion of the reactive aspect of our work is very high, which means the proactive aspect of it diminishes considerably. [We] consider learning really means the proactive that is something you fit into the reactive activities. At the time, we just don’t have time to learn – there are times when we do – but at the moment, we hate the experience that we don’t.’

The above analysis of the tensions around the time issue can then be linked to the literature on time orientation of organisations and its influence on OL. As Weber and Antal (2001) stated, the time orientation of an organisation ‘shapes the organisational time, enters into the functional symbols of organisational culture, guides strategic decision-making processes, and thereby influences organisational change and learning processes’ (p.355).

In particular, scholars like Miles and Snow (1978) stressed that learning processes take place more rapidly in future-oriented organisations because they tend to think ahead and act accordingly, and are more likely to be more open to learning than organisations oriented to the past. However, the evidence from the Dream case seems to signal the need for caution in this respect; the above statement may have

oversimplified the influence of time-orientation on learning in organisations because such a statement takes little account of the tensions and conflicts caused by the interference of management power. The present study cannot make a case comparison on this matter because the issue of time orientation did not emerge in the case of Rainbow. However, it is evident from the Dream case that the ‘future’ time orientation of the company created multifaceted tensions with respect to the demands of fulfilling existing work needs through participation as well as the nurturing of learning as a result of management intervention.

As some interviewees indicated in Chapter 4 (Section 4.3.2), from a practical point of view, learning requires time to take place because sometimes, people need to ‘look back’ and ‘be a little bit reflective’, and/or even to ‘be prepared to fail’.

However, highlighted earlier in Chapter 4 was the view that a ‘forward thinking’ organisational time orientation conflicts with the aspiration for learning at both individual and organisation levels. Weber and Antal (2001) remind us the view that the time orientation of the top management team determines the course of organisational development. As the above authors argue, time pressure can be built up in an organisation, usually through a ‘top-down’ approach. The above authors further argue that such time pressure can slow down the learning processes.

The present study extends the above understanding of the issue of time in relation to learning by providing further evidence of how management intervention, through pursuit of a learning organisation vision, shifted the organisation's time resources away from day-to-day based working practice and then affected the possibilities for needs-driven learning in the case of Dream. This problem was caused by the power dimension incorporated through the increase in the level of demand for participation in the issue of organizational learning. The problem was exacerbated by what Hardy (1996) referred to as the power dimension of manipulating meaning. For example, in the case of Dream, the learning organisation vision was interpreted as being associated with a 'future oriented' organisation time preference. It is argued that this dimension of power through the managing of meaning allows managers to change underlying values and norms of the organisation (Hardy, 1996). However, such changes may not be easily accepted by the organisation's employees due to the tensions and conflicts of interests associated with the exercise of the other dimension of management power, i.e. increasing demands for participation.

The above analysis of the impact of management intervention through pursuit of a LO in the case of Dream suggests that management intervention can cause conflicts of interest that overshadow the learning interests embedded in local practices from work needs perspectives. In addition, it can cause tensions that inhibit people's participation in their

day-to-day practices where needs-driven learning are experienced or may possibly arise. In this respect, the present analysis seems to echo the criticism that the managerial discourses and interests in OL are potentially ‘a manipulative and exploitative ideology’, masking more power of control, rather than offering an ideal workplace as promised (Driver, 2002).

Regarding the case of the Rainbow Theatre, the influence of management intervention is mainly seen in the process of implementing strategic changes under the influence of a middle-layer manager, the marketing manager. As indicated in Chapter 5, Section 5.3, management intervention involves a number of initiatives: 1) involving more people in important decision-making processes in terms of articulating the meaning of the organisation’s identity and its brand; 2) influencing people to think of the larger picture of the organisation rather than regarding it in a segmented way; 3) encouraging people to use work plans to improve information sharing and collective work within the marketing team; and 4) helping different teams to make connections with each other’s work.

The management intervention in the case of Rainbow did not seem to cause as many conflicts of interest and tensions as those occurring in the case of the Dream Theatre. However, the intervention of one department manager did cause some tense moments that had the potential to inhibit marketing department members’ participation in their day-to-day local

practice through which the needs-driven learning was mostly experienced or could arise.

As indicated in Chapter 5 (Section 5.3), this tension was created around the issue of using work plans within the marketing department when the marketing manager initially attempted to push his team to make work plans in a particular format chosen by him. This manager initially sought to introduce a certain way of working to his team, which made little sense to the marketing officers. As the manager explained, when he introduced the initiative of making work plans to his team, he took scant account of the particular work needs and interests of different individuals in the context of an arts organisation. As mentioned in Chapter 5 (Section 5.3), the marketing manager had become used to the habit of working in a very systematic way, especially in terms of using work plans, a common approach utilised by people to facilitate information sharing in the corporate environment of his previous employment. As he began to work for Rainbow, he ignored the rather informal and flexible working atmosphere of the Rainbow. Instead, he tried to impose a particular way of working that did not quite fit into the overall working atmosphere of the company. As a consequence, the manager discovered that his team members were struggling to implement his initiative. The imposing of work plans had the potential to prevent the members of staff in the marketing department from learning to share information according to their practical needs. This

was because the imposed initiative initially forced people to focus their thinking on ‘making the document beautiful to hand to’ their manager rather than to think about ‘making sure their work contained in the document is delivered’ (see Chapter 5, Section 5.3).

So far in Section 6.4.1, I have analysed and discussed the constraining effect of management intervention on learning possibilities as well as the power relations that underpin it in each of the case studies. On the one hand, management can constrain the possibilities of needs-driven learning by incorporating the legitimate functions of management - e.g. planning, organising, leading and controlling, according to Tsoukas (1994), as a source of power. On the other hand, such a legitimate form of power stemming from the essence of management hangs in the balance because the use of this power to interfere with learning can lead to conflicts of interests and tension.

In the next section, the analysis and discussions direct our attention to the encouraging effect of management intervention on learning possibilities.

6.4.2 IMPACT OF MANAGEMENT INTERVENTION ON THE POSSIBILITIES FOR OPPORTUNITIES-DRIVEN LEARNING

As indicated in Chapter 2, in the body of the organisational learning literature where the relations between management and learning were discussed, there is an emphasis on the negative connotation of

managerial power of control and domination. The concern was that the interference of management in manipulating learning initiatives and designing learning processes under the guise of organisational learning/learning organisation visions may be undertaken to secure more implicit control than to provide an ideal workplace that nurtures the actual learning of all organisation employees.

In contrast to the above views, the findings presented and discussed in this section show that the management power, if used constructively, can help to improve opportunities-driven learning possibilities. In both of the cases under examination, the constructive way of using management power to influence the possibility for opportunities-driven learning involves at least one of two dimensions. First, management intervention can serve to extend the access to existing opportunities for engagement in work practices to the wider group of participants in the organisation. This may lead to new opportunities-driven learning in work practices. Second, management intervention can create new opportunities for engagement in work practices that provide the condition for potential opportunities-driven learning to arise. Each impact category is elaborated below.

Regarding the case of Dream, management intervention is seen in both dimensions. For example, as mentioned earlier in Section 4.3.2, by extending the access of some sessions of the artistic development programme (ADP) to the members of staff from the ‘office world’,

employees felt more attached to the ensemble principle of the organisation. This extended access to opportunities for engagement in work practices in the 'creative' aspects of the organisation's work enabled some members of staff with no theatre background to learn more about the kind of organisation in which they were now working. As noted in the case report in Chapter 4, some officers enjoyed having the regular opportunity to interact with people informally from different parts of the company. They also appreciated the opportunity to learn something new either for the purpose of self-development or simply for entertainment on the job. As an illustrative quotation in Chapter 5 (Section 4.3.2) shows, by having access to the ADP, people felt more integrated into the 'ensemble' vision of the organisation:

'It makes it real this idea that this company is an ensemble. It helps to make that feel real ... I think there are lots of the Dream people not working in a creative role. But it's nice to feel close to that.'

Another example of extending the access to existing opportunities for engagement in work practices was seen in the initiative of diminishing management control from the top through empowerment of responsibility-taking in the local process of practice. As indicated in Section 4.3.2 (p. 47), this management intervention afforded individuals and departments the opportunity to become more engaged in the way the company ran its finances. This opportunity for engagement in work practices enabled some organisation members to develop a more

integrated view of the parts they played in the larger picture with respect to the use of budgets.

Additional examples of the extended opportunities for engagement in work practices include management intervention in restructuring the quarterly staff meetings, which provided opportunities for employees to engage in more interactive communications across departmental boundaries and the organisational hierarchy. As mentioned earlier in Section 4.2.2.2, work meetings were important occasions where organisation employees could discover what was going on around them and how other people were progressing with their work. As a consequence, some employees found learning opportunities in the improved organisation of meetings in so far as they could gain more insights into each other's work and challenges. An interview account illustrative of this was given in Chapter 4 (Section 4.3.2).

The kinds of impact of management intervention addressed above may be related to March's (1991) study of exploitation and exploration as two different approaches to organisational learning. According to March (1991), exploitation refines and extends the established patterns of practice and activity system in a given organisation (e.g., the improvement of efficiency and implementation, etc.). For example, in the case of Dream, the extended access to existing opportunities for engagement in work practices to members of the wider organisation is similar to March's (1991) interest in exploitation activities in that it

focuses on the refinement of existing competences and paradigms of the organisation. The present study goes beyond March's study by indicating that these extended opportunities for engagement in work practices can lead to opportunities-driven learning within the organisation. This is especially the case in terms of employees being more engaged in their own practice as well as becoming more integrated into the broader context of the organisation.

As the above analysis shows, management intervention through exploitation activities can lead to extended participation levels for some organisation members who do not normally have such a level of participation in certain organisation activities. This seems to link to Lave and Wenger's notion of 'legitimacy of participation', which they regard as being characterised by a sense of belonging, 'not only ... a condition for learning, but a constitutive element of its content' (Lave & Wenger, 1991:36). Although the present study adopts a cautious view regarding whether or not legitimacy of participation is a constitutive element of learning, it suggests that management intervention can offer the legitimacy of participation by improving the supply of conditions for participation. The improved supply of conditions shown in the cases include the extended access to existing opportunities for engagement in work practices and the newly created opportunities for engagement in work practices, which endow the participants involved with a sense of belonging. Potential learning activities may arise as a result of these

opportunities for engagement in work practices. In this respect, such opportunities may be regarded as a condition for learning.

The notion of exploration in March (1991) focuses on experimentation with new alternatives. Activities for exploration are similar to the present study's finding with respect to the creation of new opportunities for engagement in work practices in the case of Dream. For example, by introducing the idea of 'shadowing', employees were encouraged to use opportunities to spend time and follow people in other parts of the company in order to ascertain what was involved in other jobs within the concerned local context. Finally, the artistic director also suggested regular voluntary lunch-time meetings for staff members, where they could discuss work issues over lunch. All these initiatives were aimed at encouraging people to be more engaged in their participation on the job, especially in terms of becoming more connected and integrated into the broader context of the organisation.

However, an important point to note is that the extent to which the extended opportunities for engagement in work practices or newly-created opportunities for engagement in work practices may drive learning activities is partially influenced by the availability of time resources (i.e. one of the conditions for participation) in a given organisation. This point was clearly evident in the case of Dream. There, some interviewees mentioned that people generally appreciated that the company had recently made increased efforts to offer opportunities to

learn on the job. However, the issue of time associated with existing workload made it less easy to take advantage of such opportunities. As indicated in Chapter 4 (Section, 4.3.2), because people were often busy with their 'day job', they were unable to find much time to use such opportunities as much as they wished.

The opportunities for engagement in work practices generated by management intervention through exploration activities seem to provide supporting evidence for Lave and Wenger's (1991) notion of 'legitimate peripherality'. As reviewed in Chapter 2, legitimate peripherality is regarded as a position of duality. This is either an 'empowering position' that allows participants to move towards more intensive participation, or a 'disempowering position' that keeps the participants away from greater involvement. The opportunities for engagement in work practices identified in this section appear to have this characteristic of duality; on the one hand, they allow people to be more engaged in their concerned practices and drive potential learning accordingly, while on the other hand, they shift people's levels of participation away from other practices and therefore, under-nourish learning opportunity. This implies that even the constructive use of management power to intervene in opportunity-driven learning may come at a cost if such intervention competes with the needs-driven learning in terms of using organisational time. In the above case, the cost is that the increased possibilities for opportunity-driven learning are achieved by scarifying

the level of participation in other practices. The above analysis also suggests that the issue of time plays a role in placing opportunities for engagement in work practices in either an empowering or disempowering position. This adds another crucial element for consideration with respect to the impact of management intervention on the possibility for opportunities-driven learning.

In the case of Rainbow, the encouraging impact of management intervention on opportunity-driven learning is also achieved through two dimensions: extending access to existing opportunities for engagement in work practices to wider groups of organisation employees; and creating new opportunities for engagement in work practices. The first category of management intervention was established through the involvement of more people in important decision-making processes in terms of articulating the meaning of the organisation's identity and its brand. The second category was established by influencing people to think of the larger picture of the organisation, rather than perceiving it in a segmented way.

These opportunities for engagement in work practices enabled more employees to participate in their jobs in relation to the broader context of the organisation. The increasing participation in a wider set of activities, in turn, allowed participants to understand how different parts of the organisation were connected to each other, and to learn more about their roles in relation to such connections. As shown in Chapter 5

(Section 5.3), new learning experiences result from such opportunities for engagement in work practices. As one of the respondents indicated, she had learned more about her job and how its 'objectives and actions need to tie into the organisational goals'.

The above management intervention also created new opportunities for employees to identify common interests across teams/departments, which resulted in new learning activities in the organisation in terms of learning to work more collaboratively. For example, as shown in Section 5.3, as a result of the above intervention, and especially under the influence of the marketing manager, there was an increase in collaborative work at cross-team levels in the organization. This was evident, for example, between the sales team in the box office and the marketing team in the marketing department.

Regarding the impact of management intervention through creation of opportunities for engagement in work practices, in Chapter 5 (Section 5.3) an example was seen in the way in which the marketing manager tried to encourage people to share information within the marketing team and across team boundaries. This he did by promoting the use of work plans and paired-up teamwork.

Another important point to highlight is that the marketing manager's intervention in his team's ways of working also created new opportunities for engagement in work practices for him to learn more about his management practice. As described in Section 5. 3, because

this manager felt and experienced the struggle of some marketing officers to complete the 'work plan' he had set, the marketing manager realised that he needed to adjust his leadership style to accommodate the nature of an arts organisation before he could promote any change. This was particularly important given the fact that he had had no previous management experience in an arts organisation. By taking advantage of the opportunity to become more engaged in his own practice, created out of the very intervention he had constructed for his team, this manager also learned to become better in his role because he was able to gain the trust of his team and therefore, to influence them to a greater degree. A statement illustrating this point was provided in Chapter 5 (Section 5.3):

'I feel that people trust me now...It took me nine months to get there and nine months of delivery...You just need to understand personalities; understand what makes people ... to understand how to change my tone. Just one wrong word from me as a new manager could de-motivate someone very easily ... It took a long time to get there.'

Despite the tensions between the marketing manager and his team in the process of the manager's intervention, this problem was eventually solved as the manager began to adopt a new approach to influence his team's behaviour, and started to take account of the aspects that had previously been missing. As a result, the marketing officers refined his approach to 'documents relevant' rather than to compel everyone to

comply with his version of the working plan. In this respect, the function of the work plan was renegotiated in the process of his managing practice. Meanwhile, through the renegotiation of meaning in participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), a new opportunity for engagement in practice was also created for the marketing officers. They were then able to learn a different way of working in order to share information within and across teams. This case example illustrates that the tension caused by management intervention may not be static and can be transformed into new opportunities for engagement in work practices through negotiation and renegotiation of meaning in participation.

In similar vein to the Dream case, the positive impact of management intervention on learning possibilities as highlighted in the Rainbow case shows examples of the constructive use of legitimate management power to influence learning possibilities by planning, organising, managing and controlling opportunities for engagement in practice. Viewing opportunities for engagement in practice as a form of intangible resources of an organisation, such resources can be created and enhanced under the power of management operated through the implementation of management aspiration for learning. The creation and strengthening of opportunities for engagement in practice require the use of another organisational resource – time. This means that the time resource needs to be relocated in order to reflect the changes to the

supply of conditions for participation in practice, given the scarcity of such resources in one organisation. The above findings echo Tsoukas' (1994) view that managers must have delegated authority and discretionary rights over the integration of resources so that they can make a difference to the resources being combined and transformed. The above findings also suggest that the integration of resources as a result of management power may become opportunities for engagement in practice that can potentially drive situated learning. In addition, the above findings in both cases studies suggest that participants in the management group (senior and less senior) play important roles in shaping and implementing the concerned management intervention. Compared with the Rainbow Theatre, the leaders of the Dream Theatre took more initiative in engaging the other managers and employees in the overall process of undertaking management intervention. In contrast, in the case of Rainbow, it was a departmental manager in the middle layer of the management team who made more initial input in shaping and furthering the management intervention in his organisation.

6.4.3 THE POWER STRUGGLES SURROUNDING LEARNING

To bring together the analysis in Sections 6.4.1 and 6.4.2, the present study suggests that management intervention interfaces with the locally embedded driving forces of learning as identified in the two cases - work needs and opportunities for engagement in work practices. In such interplays, the influence of management intervention on learning is

indirect and has two contradictory dimensions. On the constraining side, management intervention causes conflicting interests and/or tensions that potentially prevent people from fully experiencing needs-driven learning; on the encouraging side, it also enhances existing opportunities for engagement in practice and/or creating new ones that potentially supply the conditions for opportunity-driven learning to arise.

This double-edged impact of management intervention suggests that the exercise of management power through performance of the functions of 'planning, organising, leading and controlling' (Tsoukas, 1994: 292) have unexpected consequences, constraining some learning possibilities while encouraging others. These consequences are mediated by management's influence on work needs and opportunities for engagement in work practices. This implies that management intervention has the power to control and dominate the interests considered as important to serve the organisation as a whole. At the same time, with the power of management coexists the power of engaging derived from the very process of engaging in local work practice on a day-to-day basis. This type of power can be argued to be somewhat similar to what Hardy (1996) suggested as the power of the system. I use the term 'power of engaging' to refer to a force that produces certain an outcome and, is derived from the very process of participating in local work practices. This term emphasises the connectedness of such force with the status of being engaged in a work

practice. To some extent, the ‘power of engaging’ shares a similarity with what Hardy (1996) refers as the power of system, considering both of these types of power being vested in the status-quo. According to Hardy (1996), the power of system lies in the unconscious acceptance of the values, traditions, cultures and structures of a given institutions and it captures all organizational members in its web and it is often beyond the reach of tampering by organization members. The recognition of the power of engaging, echoed by the Hardy’s view on the power of system may suggest that power is not necessarily something can be only possessed by dominant groups in organizations but can be well assigned to the ‘ordinary’ individuals and groups.

In this context, situated learning is driven by work needs and opportunities for engagement in practice. The coexistence of these two kinds of power suggests a different insight from the one angle view propounded in the OL literature. This body of research tends to present the issue of power as management disempowerment (e.g. a dominant coalition that determines what kind of learning is acceptable, as critiqued by Coopey, 1995; Easterby-Smith, 1997) or empowerment (e.g. the importance of creating the ‘right’ atmosphere/visions, as seen in Peldler et al., 1991; Sence, 1999). Another insight drawn from the analysis in Section 6.4.1 and Section 6.4.2 is that there is an ongoing tense interplay between the power of engaging and the power of management surrounding learning. Besides the differences between the

two in terms of representation of learning interests and organisational hierarchies, another interpretation of this pull lies in the underlying competition for scarce time resources between these two types of power. In other words, the operation of each type of power requires some use of time resources; because the time resources available in an organisation are usually limited, using more time resources to satisfy the operation of one type of power can be at the expense of satisfying the operation of another type of power.

The present study's findings on the double-edged impact of management intervention (as the two dimensions of management power) seem to incline towards Lave and Wenger's original yet rather intuitive thinking on the issue of 'power' as dual-dimensioned. Although Lave and Wenger (1991) stress power by connecting it with 'social organisation of and control over resources' (p. 37), it is the dual dimensions of power in their views with which the present study resonates. As Lave and Wenger (1991) argue, 'power operates to include/exclude, support/suppress, centralise/marginalise, promote/devalue rival forms of knowledge-in-practice' (1991: 38). Lave and Wenger (1991) rightly point out that the operation of power can enable or constrain/deny access to communities of practice, influencing a degree of legitimacy upon novices as a normal condition for participation in learning processes. This notion of power has been

exemplified in both of my case studies of the two theatre producing organisations through the lens of management intervention.

As reviewed in the literature, this critical concept of power as both supporting and constraining forces for learning largely remains under-addressed in both the original work and the increasing literature on OL drawn from situated learning theory (e.g. Blackler and McDonald 2000; Contu and Willmott 2003).

In this respect, one of the main contributions of the present study stemming from the above discussion and analysis rests on the empirical and theoretical insights into the constraining and encouraging impacts of management intervention on learning possibilities in the relatively unexplored context of theatre producing organisations. These empirical and theoretical insights may make more concrete the two operational dimensions of power that are so suggestively highlighted in the original version of ‘situated learning’ theory (by Lave & Wenger, 1991). More importantly, these power dimensions exemplify how they operate to influence learning possibilities. Moreover, the present study extends Lave and Wenger’s (1991) notion of power (somewhat connected with the social organisation of and control over resources). This it does by depicting power not only as being connected with the use of resources (e.g. time, opportunities for engagement in practice), but also as being associated with other organisational dimensions – demands for

participation in practice (i.e. work needs) that is more deeply imbedded in the nature of a particular practice itself.

The time orientation of organisation and the competition between different expectations of the use of organisational time is an emerging issue adding to the complexity of management intervention on learning. The wielding of management power through the attempt to direct and organise learning appears to hang in the balance due to its unexpected constraining effect on learning possibilities. This finding offers further evidence for the oversimplified adoption of the concept of power in OL literature. As reviewed in Chapter 2, the current debate on power in the OL literature tends to focus on the power of management as activities that produce legitimacy, domination and authority by controlling and manipulating organisational resources. It is argued in the literature that the wielding of such power can influence the process through which people become committed to an enterprise and to those through whom they learn.

In contrast, my study suggests that it is not the wielding of management power that shapes situated learning in the two theatre cases investigated. Rather, it is the more localised forces - working needs and opportunities for engagement in practice that drive and shape learning directly. These localised forces are tightly bound to specific contexts from the practitioner's point of view, working against management intervention in their localised learning experiences when necessary. At the same

time, these learning drives are also influenced by more structured and top-down management power that seeks to degrade context differentials, to generalise and to control, and therefore to lead from management perspectives. In this respect, my study suggests that the power relations surrounding learning are not necessarily the relation of controlling and being controlled, dominating and being dominated. Instead, a more complex interplay between different types of power is present in the achieving of a dynamic balance.

In Section 6.5, the study refers to such complex interplay between different types of power as the dynamics of organisational learning. The study provides a summary of an emergent framework of the organisational dynamics of learning derived from the above analysis and discussions.

6.5 THE ORGANISATIONAL DYNAMICS OF LEARNING — AN EMERGENT FRAMEWORK

This study suggests that three organisational dimensions appear to influence the dynamics of organisation learning in each of the cases under examination: demands for participation in practice, supplies of conditions for participation in practice, and management intervention. In particular, ‘demands for participation in practice’ and ‘supplies of conditions for participation in practice’ are represented through the

analysis of 'work needs' and 'opportunities for participation in practice' respectively as two learning drives.

The first two organisational dimensions (demands for participation and supply of conditions for participation) are embedded in what Vince (2001) referred to as the 'establishment' of an organisation system. As Vince (2001) indicated, the term 'establishment' is recognition of the complex structures and patterns that are integral to processes such as managing and organising in an organisation. In this respect, demands for participation and supplies of conditions for participation influence learning through their ability to maintain the 'establishment' of an organisation. This is because they fundamentally drive situated learning on the job when necessary for the participants in the workplace from their local practice point of view. The implication here is that situated learning happens anyway in the workplace regardless of managerial interests for the organisation as a whole from a strategic point of view.

In contrast, the third organisational dimension (management intervention) cannot drive learning directly. Instead, it influences learning by affecting the first two organisational dimensions and by initiating changes to the demands for participation and/or supplies of conditions for participation in a given work practice. Such intervention has two contrasting consequences: on the one hand, it can constrain learning possibilities by generating new demands for participation in conflict with existing demands for participation in work; on the other

hand, management intervention can also reveal such constraints and encourage learning possibilities by generating new/or enhancing existing conditions for participation in work practices. In this respect, management intervention may be argued to be the forces that can both support and constrain learning. The tension imbedded in the contrasting consequences of management intervention implies that managerial practice has various aspects in terms of its purposes and principles. These various aspects may in themselves conflict with each other. The double-edged impact of management intervention seems to echo Antonacopoulou's (2009) claim that practice has a dynamic nature and that tensions can exist within and between practices.

The three organisational dimensions mentioned above interplay in a complex way as highlighted in earlier analysis and discussions. Since neither of these organisational dimensions can wield more power over each other in terms of controlling and dominating learning, there is a dynamic balance in their complex interplay surrounding the issue of learning. This dynamic balance is achieved through the ongoing struggle between the forces that encourage learning and those that constrain learning.

This emergent framework is demonstrated in Figure 1 below. It is important to note that this figure is used here simply to present a schematic diagram of the key concepts in the framework and their relations. The actual organisational dynamics of learning as highlighted

throughout the above analysis are much more complex than the schematic view shown in Figure 1. As seen in the figure, the four key concepts of the framework are management intervention, demands for participation in practice, supply of conditions for participation in practice and situated learning. These concepts are represented by the following four capital letters respectively: M, D, S and L. As shown in Figure 1, the arrows (a) pointing from D to L and from S to L, represent the relationship of situated learning directly to work needs and opportunities for engagement in practice; work needs and opportunities for engagement in practice are parts of the demands for participation in practice and supply of conditions for participation in practice respectively. Power of engaging emerges from these relationships as represented by arrows (a). Also in Figure 1, arrows (b) pointing from M to D and from M to S, represent the relationship in which management intervention does not drive situated learning directly. Instead, it influences learning by causing changes to the demands for participation in practice (D) and the supply of conditions for participation in practice (S).

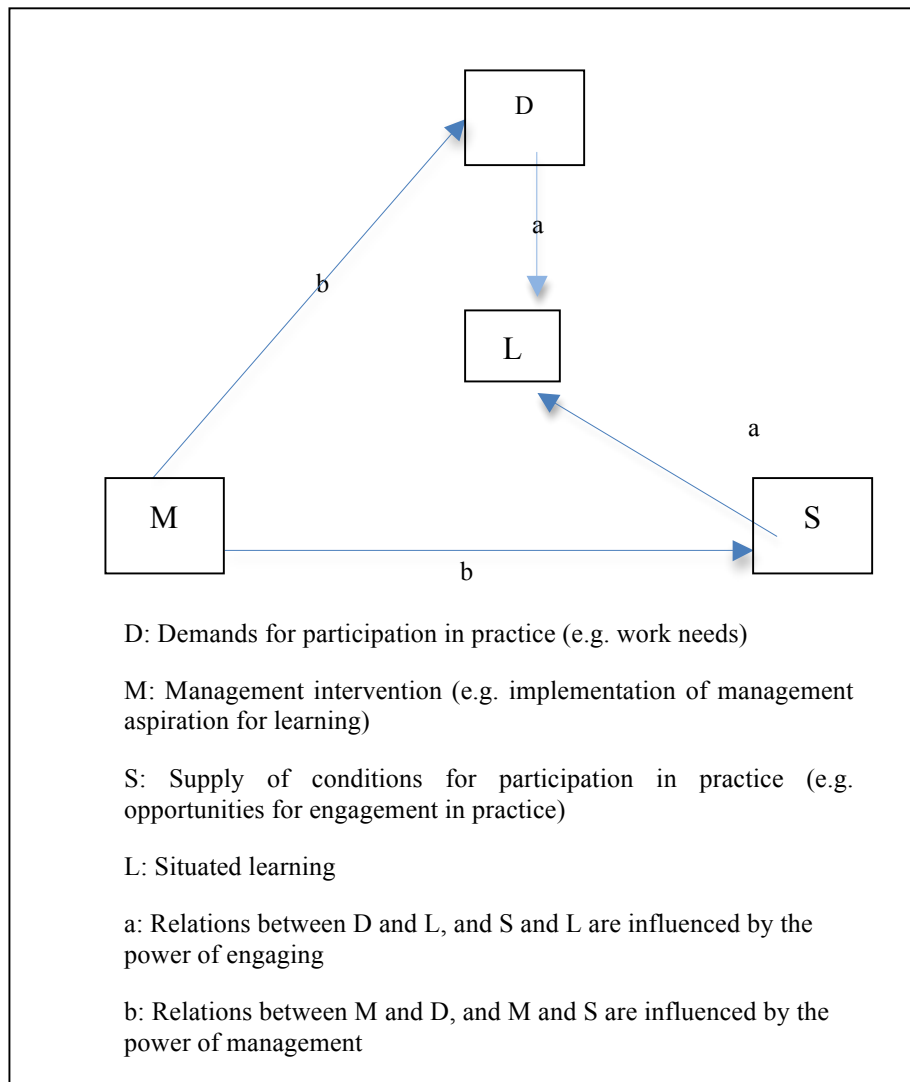


FIGURE 1 A SCHEMATIC DIAGRAM OF A FRAMEWORK OF THE ORGANIZATIONAL DYNAMICS OF LEARNING

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

As indicated in the Introduction chapter of this study, this study has closely examined the following three research questions through empirically-driven research in two theatre producing organisations: 1. What are the learning activities entailed in a given theatre producing organisation? 2. How do these learning activities arise in each of the theatre producing organisations under examination? 3. How does managerial intervention influence the learning possibilities in each of the theatre producing organisations under investigation?

The answer to the first research question has been addressed in Chapters 4 and 5 through detailed descriptions of the specific learning activities engaged in by employees in both theatre company cases under examination. The answer to the second and third research questions have been presented and discussed in Chapter 6. In answering the second research question, this study argues that the learning activities involved in each of the theatre producing organisations under investigation arise through the presence of at least one of the following drives: work needs and opportunities for engagement in work practices. In this study, work needs are regarded as the minimum yet necessary

level of demands for participation in a given practice invoked by the work of an organisation. Opportunities for engagement in work practices are regarded as the embedded or emerging opportunities that supply conditions for participation in a given practice involved in the work environment of an organisation.

In answering the third research question, this study argues that management intervention has a double-edged impact, both constraining and encouraging, on the circumstances through which learning can be driven by work needs and opportunities for engagement in work practices. The constraining impact relates to the conflicting interests and tension generated by the management group's (or individual manager's) attempt to direct learning.

The purpose of this chapter is six-fold. Firstly, it provides a summary of the major contributions of the present study (Section 7.1). Secondly, it discusses the strengths and the limitations of the study (Section 7.2). Thirdly, it offers a reflective account of the overall research process, especially in respect to the learning outcomes of the researcher (Section 7.3). Fourthly, Section 7.4 points out future research directions. Fifthly, the chapter indicates the implications for managerial practice (Section 7.5). Finally, Section 7.6 highlights the concluding words of this research in brief.

7.1. SUMMARY OF MAJOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Overall, this thesis provides an important addition to the current thinking about situated learning in work organisations. In particular, it helps to shed light on the drives of learning and the role of management intervention as two interacting power dimensions surrounding the issue of learning, based on the case study of two theatre producing organisations in the UK.

In particular, the major contributions of this study are as follows: Firstly, this study introduces a conceptual framework for understanding the possibilities for situated learning in organisations by developing the concept of ‘works needs’ and ‘opportunities for engagement in practice’ as two driving forces of learning. The introduction of these concepts offers an analytical framework that helps us to better describe as well as to capture the textures and conditions of a work practice involved in a given organisation. Specifically, it allows us to see how different patterns of learning may arise within one organisation or even between different organisations. At the same time, this analytical framework also offers further insight into how situated learning is actually integrated into the practices involved in the context of two theatre producing organisations. In particular, the study suggests the view that work needs are the textures of a practice that shape the demands for participation, and connect learning and participation in practice. Work needs are argued to be determined by the nature of a practice. In turn, these needs re-enhance the nature of the practice. Opportunities for engagement in

practice are argued to be the supply of conditions for participation in a given practice, largely determined by the established structure of a practice in an organisation system.

Secondly, the study provides a modest extension of previous studies that theorise about learning patterns and their possibilities. This is achieved by drawing attention to the distinction between ‘the demands for participation’ and ‘the supply of conditions for participation’ by arguing that the former is more associated with the nature of a work practice while the latter is more associated with the structure of a practice. By making this distinction, the study tends to treat ‘the nature of a practice’ and ‘the structure of a practice’ as different faces of a practice with different emphases. The nature of a practice emphasises the uniquely distinctive qualities of different practices that tell practitioners ‘what needs to be done’. In contrast, the structure of a practice highlights the ways in which a practice is organised, which indicates ‘what could be done’. The recognition of such difference can allow us to see what Antonacopoulou (2009) claims as the dynamic nature of a practice, where tensions and conflict are possibly inhibited. This distinction also helps us to extend one of the most influential views by Lave & Wenger (1991), namely, that the possibilities for learning are shaped by the structure of the practice, its power relations and its conditions for legitimacy. The recognition of needs-driven learning suggests that the learning possibilities can be also shaped by the nature of a practice, that

is to say, the minimum yet necessary level of demand for participation in a given practice.

Moreover, the above distinctions also help us to further consider, with caution, the issue of the extent to which situated learning is manageable. This is an important consideration as some situated learning possibilities are closely associated with the nature of a practice which may often be historically and culturally embedded rather than being controlled by the structure of a practice stemming from the formal organisational design.

Thirdly, this study offers a further critical insight into the broader debate on the issue of power relations surrounding learning. This is achieved by highlighting the indirect influence of management intervention on learning. This influence is mediated by the double-edged impact of management on circumstances through which learning can be driven by work needs and/or opportunities for engagement in work practices. Management intervention, demands for participation in a given practice and the supply of conditions for participation in a given practice represent three different dimensions of an organisation system. Because there is a complex interplay between these organisational dimensions surrounding the issue of learning, particularly mediated by the issue of organisational time, the power relations involved are not as simple as a relation of control and being controlled, of domination and being dominated. Instead, none of these organisational dimensions can wield more power over the other dimensions because of the competition

between them in terms of using scarce organisation time. Thus, there is a dynamic balance in the ongoing interplayed movements between supporting learning and challenging learning. This particular theoretical insight can help us to extend the debate on the issue of power in OL research by suggesting a third view of power as a neutral force that produces outcomes. This represents a point of divergence from the functionalist and managerialist perspectives on power commonly adopted in the mainstream of management literature.

Finally, the study identifies that the issue of time orientation of a given organisation plays a role in shaping the impact of management intervention. An early study by Miles & Snow (1978) suggests that learning processes take place more rapidly in future-oriented organisations because such organisations tend to think ahead and act accordingly, and are more likely to be open to learning than organisations oriented to the past. However, the evidence from the Dream case seems to caution that the above statement may have oversimplified the influence of time-orientation on learning in organisations. As shown in the case of Dream, the 'future' orientation of the company in fact created many tensions that were constraining to needs-driven learning as well as opportunity-driven learning.

In the next section, I will discuss the strengths and limitations of the present study.

7.2 STRENGTHS AND THE ISSUE OF GENERALISABILITY

The present study adopts a qualitative research approach to studying situated learning and the possibilities through which it may arise in two producing theatres in the UK. The main strength of this study lies in its exploratory and inductive nature, achieved by offering ‘thick’ narratives of two in-depth case studies in a particular type of organisational setting that has largely been overlooked in the field of OL studies. As Flyvbjerg (2004) argues, a key advantage of qualitative research lies in its ability to provide us with insight into local practices. At the same time, doing exploratory case studies can engage the researcher’s own learning processes in developing the skills needed to conduct quality research (Flyvbjerg, 2004). Moreover, because of the exploratory and inductive nature of this study, the theoretical insights were emergent and empirically based rather than limited to the existing theories and frameworks. This allows the present study to add different conceptual frameworks to the existing theory.

The focus on this particular type of organisation may raise the question as to whether the finding of the present study is generalisable to the wider populations of organisations beyond these two cases. As Silverman (1993) pointed out, generalisability is a standard aim in quantitative research and is normally achieved by statistical sampling procedures. However, Flyvbjerg (2006) reminds us of the whole debate

about the ‘representativeness’ of case study research featured by five points of misunderstanding, as discussed in the Methodology chapter. One of the misunderstandings related to the generalisability of case research is that ‘one cannot generalise on the basis of an individual case; therefore, the case study cannot contribute to scientific development’ (Flyvbjerg, 2004:421). However, Flyvbjerg (2006) corrects this misunderstanding of case study research and notes that generalisation is only one of many ways by which people gain and accumulate knowledge, and that ‘knowledge cannot be formally generalised does not mean that it cannot enter into the collective process of knowledge accumulation in a given field’ (p.227). The two case studies undertaken in this study are, therefore, used in a manner to generate further knowledge about the research subject that contributes to the intellectual process of knowledge accumulation. In other words, the study draws attention to the two following questions: 1. What specifically can be learned from the two cases selected? 2. How can the learning outcome extend the existing understanding of the situated learning phenomenon in organisations?

Moreover, some findings provided in this study arguably ‘have a wider resonance’ (Mason, 1996: 6) by virtue of the study’s ‘following [of] a theoretical, rather than a statistical logic’ (Bryman, 1988: 90). This means that this study offers theoretical insights that are broadly connected with previous studies on similar phenomena, either through

enhanced theoretical consistency or refined arguments. For example, the study identifies that work needs and opportunities for engagement in work practices are two types of driving forces of learning in the two cases of theatre organisations under examination. I argue that work needs and opportunities for engagement in work practices are the textures and structural elements of a practice respectively; therefore, if learning is arguably integrated into practice as propounded by the social perspective views of learning, it is reasonable to expect that research in other types of organisations may also find social learning is somewhat connected with work needs and opportunities for engagement in work practices. As demonstrated in previous analysis and discussion, the present study has compared and contrasted the similarities and differences between findings of the present study and previous studies in the literature. In this respect, the present study has a stronger resonance with other scholars' studies that examined other types of organisations.

Interestingly, I recently 'detected' evidence to show how this study relates to things beyond my current focus, albeit informally, whilst watching a BBC documentary called 'Museum of Life'. A member of staff working in the National History Museum recorded in the programme pointed out that, 'the golden rule [of great collections for specimens in the museum]' is that 'you don't throw anything [referring to specimens] away because you never know whether a new technique will come into existence which may find scientific use [for the

specimen]’.³ The narrator in the programme re-emphasised the point that the ethics of a great collection is that ‘you don’t throw anything away’. Perhaps such work ethics can be regarded as a kind of work need in an organisation like the Natural History Museum. Interestingly, this represents a clear contrast to the work needs found in the theatre organisations studied, such as ‘learning to let things go’, and ‘eradicating the old and looking for the new’. If researchers were to examine learning patterns in the Natural History Museum, the finding would possibly be quite different from the current study in terms of the above emphasised distinction in work needs. By citing this additional evidence, albeit informally, the researcher offers a reflection on the issue of ‘generalisability’ from a qualitative research perspective.

Moreover, the theoretical insights on the complexity of power relations surrounding learning associated with the double-edged impact of management attempts to organise and direct learning are arguably to have a wider resonance too as similar findings were found in other scholars’ studies. As Alasuutari (1995) reminded us, ‘generalisation is ...[a] word ... that should be reserved for surveys only. What can be analysed instead is how the researcher demonstrates that the analysis

3. *Museum of Life - A Museum in a Modern World* (Documentary) viewed on BBC

Two, 8:00pm Thursday 18th March 2010.

relates to things beyond the material at hand ...' (p.156-157). In this respect, it is arguable that some of the theoretical logic produced by the current study may have a wider resonance with other types of organisations that are beyond the current focus.

7.3 REFLECTIONS ON THE RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

The scope of investigation of this research is limited to both fieldwork access issues and the constraints of time and human resources available in a doctoral research project. In particular, little observation was made of production-making oriented practices involved in production-making processes in the case of the Dream Theatre. As such, less detailed descriptions of the local context of these practices can be offered. This was because formal access to the site of the production-making practices was not granted by the company in the case of Dream. Informal access to the site for fieldwork was also impossible because I was largely restricted to contacting or meeting members of staff directly without the benefit of coordination by the gatekeeper of the company.

Moreover, the access to the site was cut short due to the shift in interest of the senior management team to another research project examining the Dream Company as a learning organisation.

Furthermore, in respect of the case of Rainbow, more interviews would have been conducted to collect data about the management intervention in the company and its influence on learning possibilities if the initially

suggested interviews had not been cancelled and access to the site cut short.

This research may have taken a different path if more intensive and consistent commitment of a given case company had been secured. If that had been the case, this research might have conducted a single in-depth case study with an even closer investigation of the influence of management intervention on learning possibilities. This would have been achieved by comparing and contrasting the results between management intervention under the artistic leadership and business management leadership. The focus of the present study has been on management intervention under the business management leadership.

7.4 FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

This study makes three suggestions for future research directions following the findings and insights offered. First, future research may further investigate situated learning patterns in theatre producing organisations with particular focus on those associated with rehearsal practices, where creative and improvising activities take place. Due to fieldwork access issues, this area remains under-explored. As Lave & Wenger (1991) point out, situated learning is an improvising activity. This provides theoretical support for exploring situated learning activities in relation to creativity and improvisation.

Secondly, as discussed in Chapter 6, time orientation is an emerging research issue that plays a role in shaping the impact of management intervention on learning possibilities in one of the case companies under investigation. In the case of Dream, management intervention under the future orientation of the organisation caused many tensions within the organisation, which, in turn, inhibited people's participation in their day-to-day local practice through which work-needs-driven learning was mostly experienced or might possibly have arisen. This research suggests that future studies could look further into the role of time orientation in organisational learning research, either in the context of theatre producing organisations or in other organisational contexts. One way of taking forward this research issue would be to undertake a comparative study of organisations that have future orientation and those inclining towards a retrospective/reflective orientation, in order to compare and contrast their influences on learning-related issues.

Thirdly, future research could also explore the context of theatre organisations to ascertain what other organisational elements (organisational culture, senior leadership or organisational structure) may influence learning possibilities through work needs and opportunities for engagement in work practice. In particular, future research may consider how different approaches to management intervention can influence learning possibilities within and across organisations. Findings in both case studies seem to suggest that when

cooperating managers adopt a rather controlling and dominating approach to implementing management intervention, management intervention is more likely to generate more constraining consequences than encouraging ones. Comparing and constructing different approaches to management intervention between those under the artistic leadership and business management leadership may be worthy of particular attention in future research. This is because in general, the former approach is more likely to be associated with creative and improvising elements than the latter. As a consequence, it may be more possible to offer opportunities for engagement in practice for actors and, in turn, learning possibilities.

Finally, undertaking comparative case studies between theatre organisations and profit-oriented corporate organisations may also be useful for further investigation into the influence of management intervention on learning. It is important to explore how context particulars of organisations influence potential situated learning patterns and their possibilities because the situated perspectives of learning emphasise the importance of taking context into account. Comparative studies between a profit-oriented organisation and non-profit organisation may allow researchers to compare and contrast similarities and differences between potential learning patterns and learning possibilities under the influence of management intervention. It is plausible that the role of management intervention may be constructed

and may play out differently in profit-oriented versus non-profit-oriented organisations. For example, in for-profit organisations, management intervention may be regarded as more legitimate and have a less disruptive effect on learning.

7.5 MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

In respect of managerial implications, two important, though necessarily tentative, implications for practice arise from this particular study. One implication is that if a management group wishes to stimulate or promote learning activities within an organisation, it is important to first recognise the work needs at local practical levels and the possible existing learning patterns driven by these work needs. At the same time, it is also important to recognise and extend access to the existing opportunities for engagement in work practices or to offer new opportunities that can potentially enhance existing learning experiences or lead to new learning activities.

The second implication relates to management intervention that aims at stimulating learning within their organisations, which may perhaps need to consider the potential unintended consequences implied in the present study's findings. This is because new learning initiatives that aim at macro-level control and direction may shift the supply of scarce time resources available in the workplace away from participation in day-to-

day based practices and reduce the learning possibilities embedded in those practices.

7.6 CONCLUDING WORDS

As the above highlights show, this thesis has contributed to the broader debate on the subject of organisational learning from a situated learning perspective by setting out to explore and describe situated learning activities and their possibilities. In particular, it has taken account of the underlying influence of management intervention based on two in-depth case studies of theatre producing companies in the UK. The main conclusions of this research are that situated learning activities in the organisation context under examination are driven by work needs and opportunities for engagement in a given practice embarked upon by a work organisation. Management intervention does not shape learning directly, but has unexpected consequences, both constraining and encouraging with respect to some of the learning activities. The two driving forces of learning and management intervention constitute a complex interplay between three different organisational dimensions. The power relations involved surrounding learning is more of an ongoing movement in achieving a dynamic balance between the forces that support learning and those that challenge learning.

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